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SAVEUR

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Eight Delicious
Food Gifts

PAGE 28

A Holiday Feast
in Provence

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How to Bake
a Perfect Ham

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CHRISTMAS

PAGE 93



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SAVEUR



LEFT: BEN FINK; RIGHT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI. COVER MODEL: ALMA HEDDA FISHER ANGANTYR

COVER

Swiss raspberry preserve-filled sandwich cookies, a holiday treat in Switzerland.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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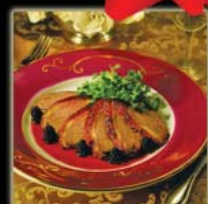
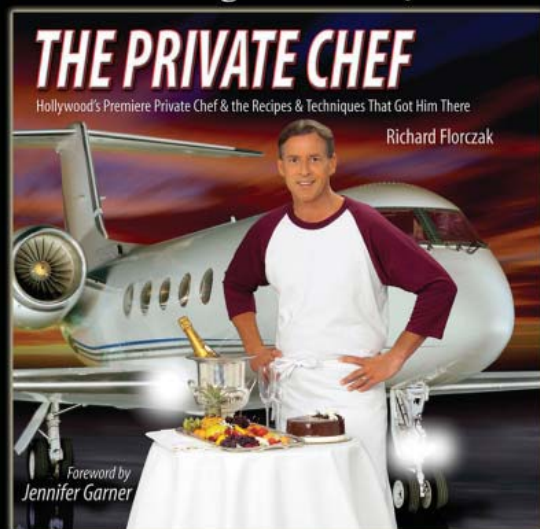
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FIRST

Shane's Gift

A contributor stops by with an earthy surprise

I FIRST MET Shane Mitchell, a regular contributor to the pages of this magazine, about ten months ago, but I'd been a fan of her work for years. Among the 20 or so pieces that she's written for *SAVEUR* since 1996 are an account of her love for dandelion greens ("Spring Lions", April 2000), a story about fishing in the Thousand Islands in upstate New York ("Shore Dinner", August/September 2003), and my favorite, an ode to her late mother's South Carolina-style fried chicken ("The Art of Fried Chicken", October 2003). To this day, just thinking about that last story, which included the best fried chicken recipe I've ever seen in print (among other details, it called for dredging the chicken inside a paper grocery bag), makes my mouth water.

Familiar as I am with Shane's fondness for writing about the foodways of the United States—and, in particular, about the ingredients that are native to our vast and ecologically diverse land—it came as no surprise when I learned that the next article she wanted to write for *SAVEUR* was a piece that would focus on a rarely celebrated vegetable: the jerusalem artichoke (see page 32). Though it's easy to imagine that this sweet, crunchy rhizome might be native to a sunny Mediterranean locale, it turns out that it's actually a product of our chilly northern woodlands. "It used to grow like the dickens in our family's backyard, in Putnam County, New York, when I was a kid," Shane said.

It also came as no surprise when I got a call a few weeks ago from Shane announcing that she had a pre-Christmas gift that she wanted to drop off at the *SAVEUR* office. (Shane has a lovely habit of paying us spontaneous visits: one time she brought over a jar of a pickle she'd recently put up; another time just a good story or two.) "I've got a little something that grew out behind my property," she said, her voice trailing off mysteriously. "I think you'll get a kick out of it."

"A little something" turned out to be understatement of the greatest magnitude, for

when Shane walked in she was carrying a fungus the size of a holiday goose. "I saw it growing a few days ago," she explained. "It's a puffball mushroom." With that, Shane went off to the *SAVEUR* test kitchen to prepare two dishes from the monster mushroom—a rich cream soup and a spare, delicious pan fry.

As she cooked, Shane told me how she first came to write for *SAVEUR*. "I met Christopher Hirsheimer [a founding editor] in Thailand in a swimming pool," she recalled. "I asked her if



Two North American miracles: Shane Mitchell and a puffball mushroom from near her property.

she'd ever heard of a Southern dish called liver pudding. She said she hadn't, so I asked if I could send some to her. 'Yes!' she answered. Now, mind you, for a few years I'd been trying to interest all the other food magazines in the dish, and each of them went, 'Ew!' Only *SAVEUR* had the guts to say, Bring it on. That's why I love this magazine." We know the feeling, Shane.

—JAMES OSELAND, *Editor-in-Chief*



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FARE

Explorers and Experimenters from the World of Food, plus Book Review, Agenda, and More

AGENDA

DECEMBER

2

Anniversary:

ROYAL SMITHFIELD SHOW

1799, London

Around the turn of the 19th century, a group of agriculturists decided to organize a national livestock show near the site of the centuries-old Smithfield meat market, in the heart of London. Today, the show, held in Somerset County, boasts more than 500 entries in 100 different classes—a great chance for Brits, and tourists, to be reminded of where their meat comes from. Information: 44/174 9822 200.

DECEMBER

3

Birthday:

ELLEN RICHARDS

1842, Dunstable, Massachusetts

Home economics may not be the most sought-after career these days, but that doesn't make Ellen Richards any less of a role model. Sure, she was given to pontificating—"Dirt is a sin," she once pronounced—but Richards, the first woman to graduate from M.I.T., was a pioneer in bringing the rigors of science into the kitchen. A

tireless crusader against malnutrition and poor kitchen hygiene, she served as the president of the American Home Economics Association from 1908 to 1910.



DECEMBER

9

GLÖGGPROVNING

Stockholm, Sweden

Every December, Stockholm's Wine and Spirits Historical Museum sets



Prize Herd

For making authentic bistecca, not just any cow will do

ISN'T IT HARD TO EAT THEM now that you know they are so cute?" Cesare Casella asked impishly, his signature bouquet of fresh herbs poking from his breast pocket, as I bit into a piece of his bistecca alla fiorentina. It was the first time he was offering the dish at Maremma, his New York City restaurant, and he knew I'd waited

two years for a taste—ever since I'd seen the framed pictures of the doe-eyed and, admittedly, cute cows in the entranceway of Beppe, his former restaurant.

Most cookbooks will tell you that bistecca alla fiorentina is simply a porterhouse or T-bone grilled over hot coals and drizzled with lemon juice and olive oil. But Casella's steak, though prepared in the

FARE

aside a day for promoting and imbibing glögg, the notoriously potent mulled brew of red wine and brandy or aquavit infused with cloves, orange peel, nutmeg, cinnamon, and cardamom. Listen to an expert re-



count glögg's history; sample a cup of the stuff from a huge, simmering pot; and nibble on honey and

pepper cakes and gingerbread. Information: 46/8 744 7072.

D E C E M B E R

10

COMMUNITY OLIVE PRESS DAY

Glen Ellen, California

The old-country tradition of collectively squashing the fruit of local olive groves at harvesttime continues in the Sonoma Valley. Participants are invited to bring their freshly picked olives, whether a single bag of them or the produce of multiple trees. Wine is on hand, naturally, and attendees can enjoy olive oil tastings, cookies, and hot apple cider as the harvest is pressed into a communal olio nuovo. Information: 800/965-4839.

D E C E M B E R

16

COLONIAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

Darien, Georgia

You won't find any Meals Ready to Eat at the first annual Christmas dinner held in the soldiers' barracks of Fort King George. What you will find in this carefully restored 18th-century colonial-era garrison are Brunswick stew, Scotch eggs, turnip greens, and other period-appropriate dishes made from recipes found in 18th-century British cookbooks. Authenticity is the order of the day beyond the kitchen, too: the floors are dirt, two fireplaces supply heat, and candles provide the only light. Information: 912/437-4770.

D E C E M B E R

17

COMMUNITY CHANUKAH PARTY

Taos, New Mexico

For 15 years, the Taos Jewish Center has been promoting neighborly food sharing and good home cooking. This year, its holiday-season potluck honors perhaps the best-loved of Hanukkah foods, the latke. Standard



Cesare Casella at his restaurant, Maremma, with three Chianina steaks.

traditional manner, was anything but ordinary. The meat—Casella uses various prime cuts—had a deep claret color and a rounded flavor that was long on the tongue and light on the palate.

Casella makes no secret of how he achieved such perfection. Just as genuine coq au vin calls for Burgundy wine, a true bistecca alla

fiorentina calls for a Tuscan cow, specifically a Chianina. Named for Tuscany's grassy Val di Chiana, this ancient and majestic breed was praised by Virgil for its beauty.

Steaks from purebred Chianina are hard to find in America. Most Chianina in this country are cross-bred with Angus (the animal is called Chi Angus) to maximize

quality and yield. The cost of rearing the large-boned purebreds, which, when grass fed, take twice as long to bring to harvest as other cattle, limits the number of breeders to a passionate few.

Casella raises his herd at a ranch in Hurleyville, New York, that provides care for people with disabilities; they help tend the cows as part of their therapy. The animals get royal treatment: in the summer, they are led daily to fresh paddocks to ensure that they always forage on nutritious new growth, and in the winter they live in open barns with lots of comfortable bedding.

Only one of the more than 50 cows in the herd Casella co-owns with the ranch ends up destined for Maremma each month. Demand is so high that Casella e-mails select customers ahead of time so that they can reserve a steak. (Those who miss out have to settle, if one can call it that, for bistecca made from organic dry-aged prime Black Angus.)

The chef has named many of his Chianina for the heroines of Puccini's operas. "Puccini and I are both from Lucca," he says. "But while his heroines die tragically, my cows do very nicely." (For information on Maremma, see *THE PANTRY*, page 99.) —*Sophie Menin*

JOHNNY APPLE REMEMBERED

R. W. Apple Jr., 1934–2006

On October 4, R. W. Apple Jr., known as Johnny to friends and colleagues, passed away, in his 72nd year, full of facts, fervent opinions, and foie gras. Widely recognized as one of the greatest and most prolific journalists of his time, he roamed the world for the *New York Times* for more than 40 years—always toting a small peppermill and never departing from a bylined locale without having reconnoitered the local gastronomic enticements. Apple came late to food writing, but like a good-time Charlie who arrives at a dull party just as it is winding down, he was a buoyant, insatiable presence that was most welcome. A contributor to *SAVEUR* since 1995—the food and wine of Trieste (November 2002) and Thanksgiving with Guy Savoy in Paris (November 2000)



were among the many subjects he covered for this magazine—he explored not only the culinary essence of a place but also the culture surrounding it. Apple was an immodest, irrepressible, and spherical sybarite—some might say a caricature of a sybarite. But above all he was a newspaperman, and like his journalistic forebears—A. J. Liebling, Waverley Root, Ernest Hemingway—he took advantage of that position to further his education in all things edible. "I travel to eat," he once explained. The son of a grocer in

Akron, Ohio, Apple made his final exit while mulling over the foods to be served at his memorial service. In a letter to his staff, Bill Keller, executive editor of the *Times*, wrote, "He was himself to the last." —*Bryan Miller*

FARE

Forbidden Fruits

With this Trinidadian holiday confection, the waiting is the hardest part



LAST MAY, AS I was leaving a gathering at a friend's home in Chaguanas, Trinidad, my hostess placed a hefty, crumpled foil package in my hands. I couldn't resist taking a peek. The moist, dense confection inside—which because of my Trinidadian background I knew is called black cake—exuded aromas of rum and spice. “I saved it for you since Christmas,” the hostess said.

To the uninitiated, the idea of

eating a piece of five-month-old cake may be unappealing, but black cake is no ordinary dessert. Made from prunes, raisins, dried



Black cake, above. Right, letters from the author's relatives, who'd send the desserts from Trinidad.

RECIPE

Trinidad Black Cake

MAKES TWO 8" CAKES

Trinidad black cake uses two uniquely West Indian ingredients: mixed essence—a perfumed combination of vanilla, almond, and pear extracts—and burnt sugar syrup, a dark, rich caramel concoction without which black cake is just an everyday fruit cake.

- 2³/₄ cups cherry brandy
- 2³/₄ cups dark rum
- 1¹/₂ cups dried currants
- 1¹/₂ cups seedless raisins
- 1¹/₄ cups pitted prunes
- 1 cup candied pitted cherries
- 1¹/₄ cup chopped mixed candied citrus peel
- 1 small cinnamon stick
- 1 star anise
- 1 2" piece vanilla bean, seeds scraped out and pod discarded
- 1 tbsp. plus 1 cup butter, softened
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1¹/₄ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 1¹/₈ tsp. ground allspice
- 1 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 6 eggs
- 1¹/₂ tsp. mixed essence (see page 99)
- 1¹/₂ tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tbsp. burnt sugar syrup (see page 99)
- 6 tbsp. sherry

1. Combine 2 cups brandy, 2 cups rum, currants, raisins, prunes, cherries, peel, cinnamon, anise, and vanilla bean seeds in a medium pot and bring to a gentle boil. Remove from heat, cover, and let steep for 2 hours.

2. Preheat oven to 350°. Grease two 8" round cake pans with 1 tbsp. butter and set aside. Sift together flour, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice into a large bowl. Set flour mixture aside. Using an electric mixer, cream the remaining butter and sugar in a large bowl until fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the mixed essence and the vanilla extract and beat until just combined. Set the butter mixture aside.

3. Drain the steeped fruit, discard cinnamon stick, transfer to food processor, and pulse until it resembles a coarse paste. Transfer the fruit paste to the bowl containing the butter mixture and beat well. Add the flour mixture in 4 batches, beating after each addition. Add the burnt sugar syrup and beat until just combined. Divide batter between the prepared cake pans and bake for 40 minutes. Lower the heat to 250° and bake until a toothpick inserted in middle comes out clean, about 25 minutes more. Let cakes cool on a rack for 20 minutes.

4. Meanwhile, mix together the remaining brandy, rum, and the sherry in a small bowl. Generously brush the cakes with the brandy mixture (save what remains) and let cool completely. Remove cakes from pans. Wrap them tightly in plastic wrap and then foil and seal in an airtight container. Store in a cool, dry place for at least 3 days before eating. (You may store cakes for up to 3 months. If doing so, use the remaining brandy mixture to rebaste the cakes generously every 7 days. Make another batch of brandy mixture, if necessary.) Cut into wedges to serve.

FARE



preparations of the potato pancake will be on offer, but you may also want to try the onion, parsley, and sweet potato versions. The pancake's time-honored accompaniments—sour cream and applesauce—will be on hand, too. Take a break between courses to spin the dreidel. Information: 505/758-8615.

D E C E M B E R

22

DONGJI

South Korea

The winter solstice, known in Korea as dongji, is the day of the year when daylight is in the shortest supply, a fact that hardly goes unnoticed in this land of harsh winters. Accordingly, Koreans look ahead, to longer days and more light; and in Korean folklore, light is symbolized by the color red. The food to eat on dongji? Patjuk, a hearty red bean porridge thought to bring good luck. For a taste of patjuk, and of this Korean tradition, head to Namdaemun market, in downtown Seoul, or dine with 40,000 others at the Samgwangsa Temple, in Busan. Information: 323/634-0280.

D E C E M B E R

29-31

OWRU YARI

Paramaribo, Suriname

Suriname, a former Dutch colony on the Caribbean coast of South America, has long been a cultural and culinary melting pot. During the days leading up to Owrú Yari (New Year's Eve), parties pop up all over the usually sleepy capital city, but things get especially festive and food focused downtown. Join revelers at the Vat, a café near the presidential palace, to feast on bamie (a noodle dish) and saoto (chicken soup), dishes imported more than a century ago from the Indonesian island of Java; and at nearby street stalls try such varied fare as Indian rotis, Creole moksie alesie (mixed rice), and tiny Dutch pancakes called poffertjes. Information: 597/410357.

currants, and citrus peels soaked (and, in turn, preserved) for weeks—sometimes months—in dark rum and cherry brandy, it evolved from England's plum pudding. Like its more famous ancestor, it is also a Christmas staple. But while plum pudding is moistened with suet and then steamed, black cake starts with a pound of creamed butter and is baked slowly so that the burnt sugar syrup that's added before baking (and which gives it its distinctive color) doesn't scorch. After baking, the cake is basted in rum, brandy, and sherry and wrapped tightly; traditional recipes recommend that the basting continue every few days for a week and then weekly for...well, the longer, the better. (It's said that a properly made black cake can keep for up to three months if it is continually basted in alcohol.)

Black cake, for me, is a symbol

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



"Long after the ladies had retired, did the hot elder wine, well qualified with brandy and spice, go round, and round, and round again."

—CHARLES DICKENS, *THE PICKWICK PAPERS*

of childhood. Every year before Christmas, a whole cake, sent by regular mail from my cousin Pinky in Trinidad, arrived at our New York City doorstep, having weathered the three-week sea journey. Deemed too alcoholic for my brother and me, the cake was stored in an old Danish-cookie tin,

ostensibly out of reach; but when Dad wasn't looking, we'd raid the tin for a forbidden taste.

Lately, some forward-thinking Trinidadian cooks have tried to improve on perfection by using fruits other than those called for in traditional recipes for black cake; others have started to substitute Guinness or dry red wine for the rum or brandy usually used for basting. Wasted efforts, I say. And yet, my longing for a quick fix has made me accept certain compromises. A Trinidadian baker I know, Irma Hannays, taught me that steeping the cake in spirits for a few days—instead of the customary weeks or months—produces quite nearly the same effect as a marathon soaking. Thanks to her, I can now make my black cake and eat it too, all in the same week.

—Ramin Ganeshram



MASSAGING THE PERSIMMON

"I make hoshi gaki," said the man sitting next to me at the California Farm Conference in Sacramento. Noticing the perplexed look on my face, he continued, "It's a whole, dried hachiya persimmon. You have to massage it for a month." The idea of massaging a piece of fruit for a month was a bit weird, but the man—whose name tag identified him as Jeff Rieger, a farmer from

Placer County—seemed legitimate enough. So, when I got home, I did some checking. Sure enough, there it was on the Slow Food USA website: "Japanese massaged dried persimmon". It turns out that Japanese villagers have hung persimmons to dry in the autumn air, massaging them to keep them soft, for centuries; the painstaking tradition of making hoshi gaki traveled to California with immigrant farmers in the 19th century. First, the fruit is peeled, trimmed, and hung from a string over a bamboo pole. Then the persimmons are given a light, fingertip massage every other day for up to five weeks until they develop a tender consistency. As the fruit is massaged, fructose rises to the surface in a frostlike bloom that looks like powdered sugar; the process yields a chewy fruit with a deep, concentrated persimmon flavor that's slightly sweeter than a dried fig. There is no effective way to automate the labor-intensive process, so, between soaring land values and high production costs, the practice almost died out in California, carried on by a

handful of aging cultivators. Enter small farmers like Rieger, who has begun to revive the tradition with an eye toward a high-end clientele; hoshi gaki is generally available from late fall through January—for now only at a few farmers' markets in California or by special order. (For a source for hoshi gaki, see *THE PANTRY*, page 99.) —Laurence Hauben



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BOOK REVIEW

Fabulous Five

Our favorite winter books are terrific reads, in the kitchen or in the armchair

Into the Vietnamese Kitchen: Treasured Foodways, Modern Flavors | By **Andrea Nguyen** | Ten Speed Press

Author Andrea Nguyen, a frequent contributor to *SAVEUR*, was six years old in 1975 when she and her family were airlifted from her native Saigon a few days before the city fell to the North Vietnamese army. Her mother, a dedicated home cook, packed light: a couple of packets of instant noodles and a notebook filled with handwritten recipes were among the few items that she took along with her. That notebook, which she gave to her daughter a few years back, became the inspiration for this smart, soulful collection of Vietnamese recipes. Aficionados of the country's cooking will find all of its cornerstone dishes represented here, from phở bò (beef phở), the succulent breakfast noodle soup seasoned with star anise and cinnamon, to bánh xèo (sizzling crêpes), savory rice-flour pancakes that get their local name from the “ssssseh-ao sound that the batter makes when it hits the hot skillet”. Those less familiar with the cuisine will gain easy entry into its whys and wherefores, learning, for instance, how to identify key herbs (including red perilla and culantro) and how to make nước màu, a signature (though

potentially challenging to prepare) caramel sauce that is brilliantly deconstructed here for the Western cook. The best part, though, is the way in which Nguyen subtly infuses the volume with her mother's presence. You feel her homespun wisdom resonating on every page of this quietly remarkable book. —*James Oseland*

Blithe Tomato: An Insider's Wry Look at Farmers' Market Society | By **Mike Madison** | Great Valley Books

Mike Madison is a rare find: a person who possesses both the pragmatism required of a farmer and the keen eye for flawed human nature required of a humorist. The book that Madison, who operates a farm in California's Sacramento Valley, has written is proof that it's an irresistible combination. In documenting the arduous and sometimes oddball life of small-scale farmers, Madison introduces us to a cast of characters with whom I instantly fell in love: a farmer named Dan who is obsessed with apricot pits; Margot, a farm owner who

conceives a child with an 18-year-old migrant worker; and Ulf, who is described as a Zen master of collard greens. In sketching these lively figures, Madison manages to discuss everything from the painter Pieter

Brueghel to the merits of using a scythe as compared with a sickle, and he exhibits a singular talent for choosing just the right words—when you read his comparison of the sex life of humans to that of gophers, you'll understand. Quiet, whimsical drawings by Patrick McFarlin and an introduction by Madison's sister, Deborah, a *SAVEUR* consulting editor, add another dimension to this rich portrait. Putting the

book down, I had to resist the urge to run off with the farmers. —*Liz Pearson*

Molecular Gastronomy: Exploring the Science of Flavor | By **Hervé This** | Columbia University Press

What's the best way to cook pasta? Are gnocchi really done when they float to the top? What





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FARE

makes cheese good? These are a few of the hundreds of questions tackled by French chemist Hervé This (pronounced teess) in this extravagantly researched book, a must-have for gourmands everywhere. “Testing such questions experimentally is a simple matter,” the author writes, “but we are rarely willing to go to the trouble.” Luckily for us food geeks, This has done just that. (By the way, the answers to the foregoing questions are, respectively: in a rich broth; no; and... well, go to chapter 59.) The author’s analyses are exhaustive and, to the less chemistry-minded reader, sometimes exhausting. Take, for instance, the hotly debated question of how to season a steak. Do you salt it before, during, or after cooking? This conducts a sober inquest, employing, among other things, an electron microscope and a chemical-element-detecting device. The verdict? It makes no discernible difference when you salt your steak. I have to admit that I heaved a sigh of relief. This book, praiseworthy for its scientific rigor, will hold special appeal for anyone who relishes the debunking of culinary myths—of those “old wives’ tales...that weigh us down when they are false and...carry us aloft when they are true”. —*Todd Coleman*

Joy of Cooking: 75th Anniversary Edition | By **Irma S. Rombauer, Marion Rombauer Becker, and Ethan Becker** | Scribner

Few books are as indispensable in the American kitchen as *Joy of Cooking*, and this latest edition is perhaps the best incarnation yet of what has become an American institution. And to think: when Irma S. Rombauer self-published *The Joy of Cooking: A Compilation of Reliable Recipes with an Occasional Culinary Chat* in 1931, she mostly wanted to provide her children with a written record of their favorite dishes. Over the years, the book has grown in size and scope (the earnest subtitle eventually dropped off), and now, 75 years after its initial publication, this collection of recipes and methods, with its concise illustrations and lucid descriptions, is still a model of accessibility and thoroughness. As have past editions, this one has been updated and amplified to make it reflect contemporary cooking practices while retaining tried-and-true recipes from earlier editions. Classics from the 1960s, like chicken kiev, have been revived, and an extensive chapter on cocktails contains both contemporary concoctions and classics that hark back to



the editions of the late 1940s. I was delighted to find a few of the tea sandwich recipes my grandmother loved. While some sections, like those on making cheese and canning, may be impractical for some people, overall *Joy of Cooking* has remained utterly true to its name. —*Georgia Freedman*

Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant Cookbook: A Lifetime of Recipes from the Shenandoah Valley | By **Mollie Cox Bryan** | Ten Speed Press

What is real roadside comfort food? Mildred Rowe would have told you that it's more than just gravy; it's the gritty story behind the cooking. Appropriately, this weird and wonderful cookbook is in essence a biography of Mildred Craft Rowe, who ran the famous namesake restaurant located off I-81 in Staunton, Virginia, for more than 50 years, until her death, in 2003. As a single mother in 1947, during the glory days of the roadside restaurant, Mildred scraped together enough money to open a little luncheonette; nearly 60 years later, more than half a million people a year dine at the roadhouse she later built. The fabulous photos that accompany the story and the recipes—witchy-looking waitresses in cat-eye glasses, old men's rear ends on counter stools, fat hands cutting Virginia country ham—are far from quaint, and for that very reason they are righteous sights in

RECIPE

Banana Pudding

SERVES 6-8

This recipe for banana pudding, included in *Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant Cookbook* by Mollie Cox Bryan (Ten Speed Press, 2006), is from Vivian Obie. She worked at the restaurant for nearly 40 years preparing many of its long-standing menu items, among them this pudding and the coconut cream pie—the two most ordered desserts.

- 4 cups milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 3 tbsp. sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornstarch
- 4 eggs, separated
- 4 tsp. unsalted butter
- 2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 12 oz. box vanilla wafers
- 3-4 firm bananas
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. cream of tartar

1. Heat milk in top of a double boiler set over simmering water. In a small bowl, whisk together $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar, cornstarch, egg yolks, and enough water to make a soupy paste (about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup). Whisk egg yolk mixture into milk. Cook, stirring constantly, until thickened to the consistency of pudding, 30-40 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in butter and vanilla. Let cool slightly.

2. Preheat the oven to 325°. Cover bottom of a 9" x 13" baking dish with half the vanilla wafers. Slice the bananas into $\frac{1}{2}$ "-thick rounds and spread half of them over wafers. Cover bananas with half the pudding. Spread remaining wafers over pudding, followed by remaining bananas. Pour rest of the pudding over top.

3. Place egg whites and cream of tartar in a chilled metal bowl. Using an electric mixer on slow to medium speed, beat until soft peaks form. Add the remaining sugar 1 tbsp. at a time and continue to beat until stiff but not dry peaks form to make a meringue. Spread meringue over pudding and bake until lightly browned, 20-30 minutes. Serve warm, at room temperature, or chilled.

this age of packaged cookbooks. Mildred's Appalachian aphorisms—like “Lard is a gift from God”—are hilarious, and I'm a fool for the recipes: mostly toothsome standards like chicken and dumplings, chipped-beef gravy, candied yams, and banana pudding. Most of all, I love that this book captures the real meat of life, not just its gravy. —*Lily Binns* 

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THE SAVEUR LIST

8 Food Gifts

These tasteful treats will entice your loved ones—and perhaps you, too

REMEMBER THOSE CORNY (and, okay, really delicious) Hickory Farms cheese balls that your folks (or maybe even you) used to receive during the holidays from Grandma or Uncle Gene? Gratifying though such gifts were, American palates have grown up since then. Nowadays we crave brash, clean, smart flavors and textures

and foods that represent the entire globe, not just the cheese-and-beef-jerky shop at the mall. With that in mind, we came up with this selection of our favorite edible gifts. So, no matter what the taste buds in question prefer, there's something on this list guaranteed to please everyone on *your* list. (See *THE PANTRY*, page 99, for sources.)

1 | CARR VALLEY PRIZE WINNERS \$70/eight wedges. Wisconsin-based cheese maker Sid Cook's company, Carr Valley Cheese, consistently takes home top honors from the American Cheese Society. This sample pack gives a taste of some of the company's

these meaty cashews, which get their addictive spiciness from rose, green, white, black, and brown peppercorns. Grab a big handful while you're able; they'll disappear fast.

3 | LOBEL'S OF NEW YORK PORTERHOUSE \$96.98/36-ounce steak.

The true carnivores in your life will appreciate this gloriously formidable slab of USDA prime meat. Is it worth the equally hefty price? Absolutely. Lobel's dry-ages it for six weeks and always ships it fresh—no frozen mystery bricks here—and regardless of how you like your steak done, this porterhouse cooks up beautifully, retains its juices, and delivers rich, buttery flavor.

most inventive winners, from the slightly smoky goats' milk Cocoa Cardona (the rind is rubbed with cocoa) to the citrus-tinged, olive oil-cured Gran Canaria (a blend of sheep's, goats', and cows' milk).

2 | SQUIRREL BRAND FIVE PEPPER MEYER PRIVATE RESERVE CASHEWS \$45.99/36 ounces in a wooden gift box. Canned nuts are a party snack standard, but the versions dreamt up by the folks at the Squirrel Brand Co. are more than a cut above the rest. If we had to pick one of the company's products to send out during the holiday season, it would certainly be

4 | FRESH THAI PRODUCE KIT \$24.95. Set

your friends on the path to enlightenment with ImportFood.com's starter pack of fresh, whole lemongrass stalks, galangal, and fiery thai chiles. These signature Southeast Asian ingredients will inspire any home cook to conjure that region's vibrant dishes in his or her own kitchen.

5 | PARAMESWARAN'S SPECIAL WYNAD PEPPER \$23/200-gram bag. This mixture combines two peppercorn varieties, karimunda and panniur, from the Parameswaran estate in Kerala, on India's southwestern coast, the region where pepper is native. Both types ripen fully on the vine before they're dried in the sun; the result is an astonishingly aromatic, fruity-tasting blend that promises to enliven your next garam masala or steak au poivre.

6 | MEDJOL DATES \$14.95/two-pound box of "jumbo" dates. Though the fruit of the date palm tree has graced tables in North Africa and the Middle East for centuries, this variety—thought to have been reserved at one time for Moroccan royalty—has been grown in California's Bard Valley since the 1920s. The date's plump, almost translucent reddish flesh is honey sweet and always alluring.

7 | LAMMES CANDIES PEPPERMINT KISSES \$27.60/two-pound box. Balancing salty and sugary notes, these pretty, hand-striped taffy nuggets are made by a family-run confectionery in Austin, Texas. With their minty zing and satisfying chewiness, they challenge their Jersey shore boardwalk cousins bite for bite.

8 | POMEGRANATES \$23/box of five. Sure, pomegranates have had a lot of press devoted to them lately (thanks to POM Wonderful), but we've always regarded them as a wintertime jewel. Those sourced by Melissa's/World Variety Produce from California are consistently excellent. The fruit's rosy skin, which cracks open to reveal dozens of sweet-tart opalescent kernels, makes it one food gift whose fancy packaging is complimentary. —Kate Fox





a feast for the holidays

an easy meal for any day

Australian Lamb makes a delicious holiday highlight. It's also easy and quick to prepare for everyday meals. Flavorful chops, shanks or legs are perfect for roasting, grilling or braising in minutes. And because Australian Lamb grazes on lush, green pastures, it's mild, lean and rich in nutrients—ideal for everyone at your table, any time of the year.

Sage-and-Mint **Australian Lamb Loin Chops** on Pea Mash

8 Australian Lamb loin chops
olive oil, for cooking
2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage
1/4 cup white wine
1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
8-10 mint leaves, torn
2 potatoes, peeled and chopped
2 cups green peas (fresh or frozen)
1/4 cup buttermilk or milk
salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

1. Brush chops lightly with olive oil. Press sage, salt and pepper into the surface. Cover and allow to rest at room temp for 15 minutes for flavors to infuse.

2. For pea mash, boil potatoes in salted water until nearly cooked, add the peas and cook 1-2 minutes or until just tender. Mash well and fold in buttermilk to desired consistency. Season to taste, keep warm.

3. Heat a large nonstick pan over medium heat, adding oil to coat the bottom. Add the lamb. Cook for 3 minutes on each side or until barely medium rare. Drain excess fat and add the wine, vinegar and mint. Cover and cook for 1-2 minutes, turning chops to allow flavors to infuse. Serve on pea mash with pan juices spooned over.

Check out our **NEW** website for easy and delicious Australian Lamb recipes, store locations, free offers and sweepstakes. It's all here at www.australian-lamb.com/sa

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All-American Holiday

Year's end brings celebrations around the world. Give your festivities a uniquely American flavor with world-class artisanal cheeses from Wisconsin.

There's a revolution brewing in the most unlikely of places. Wisconsin's picturesque countryside, its rolling hills dotted with iconic herds of Holsteins and Brown Swiss, is the epicenter of this upheaval. Just as New World vintners have changed the way the world makes wine, Wisconsin's master cheesemakers are using the same combination of Old World sensibilities and New World know-how to mount a delicate assault on our taste buds.

Long known for the highest quality cheddars, Wisconsin's cheesemakers have applied their single-minded pursuit of perfection to an amazing array of varieties. Their foundations span the globe, from Middle Eastern cheeses like Jibneh Arabieh to India-inspired Paneer to more familiar cheeses like Camembert, Chevre and Asiago. These Wisconsin cheeses have earned high honors, but producers have gone far beyond making superb traditional cheeses. Just as winemakers have exploited the peculiarities of Sonoma's climate and superior soils to make wines that are uniquely Californian, master cheesemakers use Wisconsin's terroir to create cheeses that capture the evanescence of time and season.

"In my opinion, superior cheese starts with superior milk," says Liz Thorpe, director of wholesale for cheese giant Murray's in New York City and co-author of *Murray's Cheese Handbook*. "There's a real attention to that by Wisconsin cheesemakers and many of them are milking no more than 150 cows. Their cows are out eating grass and there's a seasonal variation in the complexity and the flavor that you just can't fake. I'm selling these cheeses to traditional four-star French restaurants like Jean Georges and Chanterelle. They're putting Wisconsin cheeses on their cheese carts night after night."

Every ounce of Wisconsin cheese, whatever its variety, is made by a licensed cheesemaker but it is the state's master cheesemakers who are leading the revolution. One of the most noted is Gianni Toffolon. Originally from Cremona, Italy, Gianni moved to Wisconsin in 1979 and became a certified Master in Parmesan and Fontina cheeses. "The Master's program gives you access to

talented professors who explain the science behind the art," says Toffolon, "That makes me a better cheesemaker and provides the creative knowledge to produce original cheeses from BelGioioso such as American Grana®, Crescenza-Stracchino and Italico™."

Sid Cook is a fourth-generation Wisconsin cheesemaker who has both great respect for tradition and the desire to create new tastes.

"As a master cheesemaker I've studied cheese techniques from around the world and I have memories of relatives who made cheese and how they did it. It was easy for us to do some amazing American originals. We're not imitating European cheeses, we're creating new cheeses."

"We make a Benedictine that combines sheep milk, goat milk and cow milk. We use the same bacteria that's used to make Gruyere but this cheese has a completely different flavor profile. The combination of three milks gives it great complexity. On the front side of your tongue is a sharp, tart flavor from the sheep milk, then the cow milk carries it back on your palette. It has a very aromatic finish from the goat milk."

"Blending Old World traditions with new ideas is what America is all about. Most of us have ancestors who came here from the Old World, so there are great European traditions. But now we're all Americans. I like to see people appreciating that as we celebrate the year-end holidays."

As you plan your holiday gatherings, think about Sid Cook, Gianni Toffolon and their fellow cheesemakers. Serve up a global variety of flavorful Wisconsin cheeses even while you celebrate the uniqueness of being American.



Wisconsin Blue Cheese Walnut Wafers

"Short and rich" is the best way to describe these delectable bites.

- 1 cup (4 ounces) crumbled Wisconsin Blue cheese, at room temperature
- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter in pieces, at room temperature
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup finely chopped walnuts

Cream the Blue cheese and butter with an electric mixer until fluffy. Mix in flour and walnuts thoroughly. Form into a log about 2 inches in diameter and 12 inches long. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for at least 1 hour or overnight.

Preheat oven to 375°F. Cut log into slices 1/4 inch thick. Place slices 1/2 inch apart on baking sheets. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes. Watch closely. Bake just until bottoms are lightly browned. Cool on wire racks. Store in air tight containers

Makes 4 dozen.

INGREDIENT

Winter Sun

Jerusalem artichokes are a cold-weather favorite whose taste is sweet and warm

BY SHANE MITCHELL

MY YOUNGER brother, Jamie, got the spanking of his life after he yanked out a bed of jerusalem artichokes to make way for his miniature golf course in the backyard of our childhood home. He thought they were just a bunch of weeds. My mother was furious. She had planted the tubers earlier that spring, and the reedy stalks, with their pointed green leaves and butter yellow blooms, had not yet matured.

Jerusalem artichokes, which are native to North America in spite of what their name implies, grow practically everywhere in the United States and southeastern Canada, although they seem to thrive in cooler climates and in places with sandy, loamy soil (including my childhood yard, in upstate New York). As with the potato, the edible portion is the rhizome of the underground stem; the principal carbohydrate it contains, however, is inulin rather than starch, making the jerusalem artichoke a lighter-tasting but less digestible alternative to an Idaho russet. Certain varieties, such as the white-skinned mammoth and the maroon-hued red fuseau, are valued by growers for their early yield or their straight, knob-free tubers. When eaten raw, they have a taste that is mildly sweet, similar to that of a crunchy water chestnut or jicama.

MY BROTHER WAS NOT the first person to mistake the plant for something else. Its rhizome was well known

SHANE MITCHELL, who writes frequently for SAVEUR, is a contributing editor for Travel and Leisure.



to American Indians but was most likely ignored by Europeans until the arrival of French explorer Samuel de Champlain, who made one of the earliest written references to the root as something you might actually eat after tearing it out of the ground. Champlain first sampled *Helianthus tuberosus* in 1603, when he disembarked at Cape Cod during a survey of the Eastern seaboard and noted that the sweet tuber growing there tasted like an artichoke.

Soon after Champlain introduced the root to the Old World, Parisian vegetable vendors were hawking it as topinambour, after a Brazilian tribe of a similar name. (Native Brazilians knew nothing of the root, but that didn't seem to matter to its early promoters in France, who were likely inspired when six members

A patch of *Helianthus tuberosus*, above left; right, the freshly unearthed rhizome.

INGREDIENT

of the Topinambous tribe were brought as living curiosities to Europe in 1613.) The tuber was included in dishes both sweet and savory, although it eventually fell out of favor around the same time that Europeans finally decided that the potato was fit for human consumption.

Back on the jerusalem artichoke's home turf almost two centuries later, Thomas Jefferson referenced the tuber in his kitchen garden records for Monticello, one of his two Virginia estates. In a manuscript on Jefferson's gastronomic legacy, American culinary historian Karen Hess, co-author of *The Taste of America*, cites a recipe from François Menon's *Les soupers de la cour*, published in 1755, which recommends that both potatoes and "taupinambours" be boiled, dipped in a wine batter, fried, and then served with a sauce blanche or à la moutarde. Hess conjectures that Etienne Lemaire, who was Jefferson's maître d'hôtel during the third president's White House tenure, from 1801 to 1809, would have served the tubers in that saucy manner.

Hess also confirms that the same preparation was known to Jefferson's cousin Mary Randolph, author of *The Virginia House-wife* (1824), in which she instructed that jerusalem artichokes be "boiled and dressed in the various ways...directed for potatoes [sic]" and suggested that they be topped with melted butter or "a nice white or brown sauce". As Hess says, "Randolph got most of her French recipes from Lemaire, although hers was a watered down version." It's also worth noting that while Jefferson was dining in state, his Corps of Discovery officers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were foraging for jerusalem artichokes under leaner circumstances (and minus the mustard sauce) on their Western expedition.

So, how did *Helianthus tuberosus* get its misleading modern name? Alan Davidson, the late editor of the *Oxford Companion to Food*, contended that the common moniker for the tuber is a corruption of *girasole*, Italian for sunflower, to which the tuber is closely related. Another theory points to 1616, when the root was apparently introduced to England by way of Terneuzen, Holland (but why the British would bastardize *Terneuzen* into *jerusalem* is left unexplained).

To confuse matters further, the tuber happens to be the base for a traditional British dish called Palestine soup.

No matter the name, American home cooks, especially ones from the Southeast, have never forgotten how versatile these native rhizomes can be. On Edisto Island, in South Carolina, my

great-grandmother grew jerusalem artichokes in a kitchen garden and passed down to my mother recipes calling for both whole pickles and finely chopped relish. Written in curlicue script on ruled composition paper splattered with cooking liquid, one recipe recommends letting the cleaned jerusalem artichokes rest in a salt brine and then pickling them in a mustard-and-vinegar sauce along with fresh ginger and chiles. Now I serve this homey dish in cut-crystal compote bowls, inherited from Mom, at our Christmas dinner, where the pickle's tangy crunch is used to balance the richness of roasted turkey or baked ham.

After a long hiatus from haute kitchens, the jerusalem artichoke has made a comeback on restaurant menus. Thomas Keller of the French Laundry told me, "We do many things with them: purées, pickle, roast; they're a very versatile vegetable." Because they're harvested in the cold months—from late fall until the ground freezes solid—and keep well, the tubers seem particularly suited to hearty meals in the winter, when summer vegetables have vanished from regional farm markets. As interest has increased, some purveyors have decided to sidestep the etymological confusion by labeling the golden tubers "sunchokes".

The cookbook author and distinguished chef Edna Lewis, who grew up in rural Virginia, wrote that jerusalem artichokes are often boiled, buttered, and creamed. Reading Lewis's *In Pursuit of Flavor* not long ago, I laughed when I read the headnote for her own jerusalem artichoke pickle recipe: "The sunflowers and artichokes were always at the back

of the garden," she remembered, "and over the years they spread out of control and it became necessary to pull some up." Maybe my baby brother didn't deserve that spanking after all. 🐾

THE PANTRY, page 99: A source for jerusalem artichokes.



METHOD

Sautéed Jerusalem Artichokes

Fill a medium pot with water. Squeeze in the juice of half a lemon; drop the lemon half into the water. Using a small knife, peel 2½ lbs. jerusalem artichokes, one knobby tuber at a time; cut each into oblique 1½" chunks and drop chunks into the pot. (It's important to place the freshly cut chunks in the lemon-spiked water as you go, to prevent discoloration.) Pour in more water, if necessary, to cover artichokes by 1". Season generously with salt. Bring to a boil, covered; reduce heat to medium. Simmer, uncovered, until just tender, 2–4 minutes. Drain and discard lemon. Heat 2 tbsp. butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat until butter just begins to turn golden brown and foam subsides. Add artichokes and spread them out evenly. Cook, without stirring, until golden brown on one side. Then occasionally stir gently until some sides are deep golden brown while some are paler, about 6–8 minutes total. Stir in 1 tbsp. fresh thyme leaves and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Serves 4.

CELLAR

War of the Riojas

Spain's celebrated red wine fuels an ongoing debate

BY MICHAEL STEINBERGER

FOR A BEVERAGE supposedly synonymous with pleasure and tranquillity, wine seems to provoke an awful lot of rancor. Take, for instance, rioja, Spain's most famous red wine, composed (for the most part) of the country's signature grape, tempranillo. Recent years have seen the emergence of what was initially hailed as a new breed of rioja—a darker, plusher, more lavishly fruited wine, one aged not in the traditional American oak but, rather, in small barrels of new French oak. While the older-style riojas tended to evoke Burgundy, these *alta expresión* wines clearly drew their inspiration from Bordeaux. To some that was a good thing, to others it was a pity, and the two sides have been at odds ever since.

Lately, though, the argument has taken a surprising turn. Some fans of the new-style riojas are now claiming that these wines are actually true old-school riojas and that the lighter riojas, which for so long have been portrayed as exemplars of the traditional, are, in fact, the imposters. They claim that back in the day, the finest riojas were deeply colored, strapping wines—exactly the sort of vintages that are now being produced by Rioja's so-called modernists. According to this account, it was only in the 1970s and 1980s that lean, pale, cherry- and vanilla-scented wines came to be regarded as the norm. Not so, say loyalists of the more delicate style.

If what constitutes an old-school rioja is an open question, there is no

doubt about which producers represent Rioja's old guard. A handful of venerable *bodegas* (wineries)—CVNE, Bodegas Muga, Marqués de Riscal, Marqués de Murrieta, La Rioja Alta, López de Heredia, and Bodegas Riojanas—continue to produce some of the region's most respected wines. Within this group are differences in style and approach. López de Heredia and La Rioja Alta are immune to fashion and proudly persist in turning out lightly colored, silky wines aged only in American oak. The others have taken steps to accommodate themselves to changing times and tastes, by modernizing their cellars and introducing new wines that attempt to synthesize the traditional and the modern (however those terms are defined). These *bodegas* remain the region's most recognizable names, producing reasonably priced wines that cast rioja in a distinctive, flattering light.



Tasting Notes

Here are 12 riojas that we've recently tasted from the region's oldest and most distinguished wineries. See THE PANTRY, page 99, for sources.

BODEGAS MUGA PRADO ENEA GRAN RESERVA 1996 (\$49). A bouquet of mulberries, black cherries, coffee grounds, leather, and spicy oak. Sweet and sour cherries in the mouth, good acidity, and ripe tannins. An excellent rioja.

BODEGAS MUGA RESERVA 2002 (\$23). Notes of blackberries, cherry preserves, tobacco, leather, and dust in the nose. Full-bodied, with ripe blackberries and cherries on the palate. Good acidity, but dry, slightly overbearing tannins.

BODEGAS RIOJANAS MONTE REAL RESERVA 2000 (\$22). A sumptuous bouquet, with roses, tobacco, and dried herbs. Dusty cherry fruit in the mouth, with nicely buffered tannins. A quietly captivating wine.

BODEGAS RIOJANAS VIÑA ALBINA RESERVA 2000 (\$21). A blast of dill on the nose, then fresh strawberries, smoke, leather, and a hint of soy sauce. Medium-bodied, with strawberry on the palate. Ripe tannins and excellent acidity.

CVNE IMPERIAL GRAN RESERVA 1996 (\$65). Aromas of spices, flowers, and red currants and a citrus-and-honey note. A burly wine, with sweetish black fruit cut by a tart citric edge. Quite oaky, but with good depth and structure.

CVNE VIÑA REAL CRIANZA 2002 (\$20). Gaminess on the nose, with cherry, tobacco, and vanilla notes. Warm, tart cherry fruit on the palate; also quite spicy. An abrupt finish without a great deal of depth, but a nice, basic rioja.

LÓPEZ DE HEREDIA VIÑA BOSCONIA RESERVA 1998 (\$30). A nose redolent of cherries, strawberries, tobacco, and licorice. Full of sweet and sour cherry fruit. Could do with just a bit more depth.

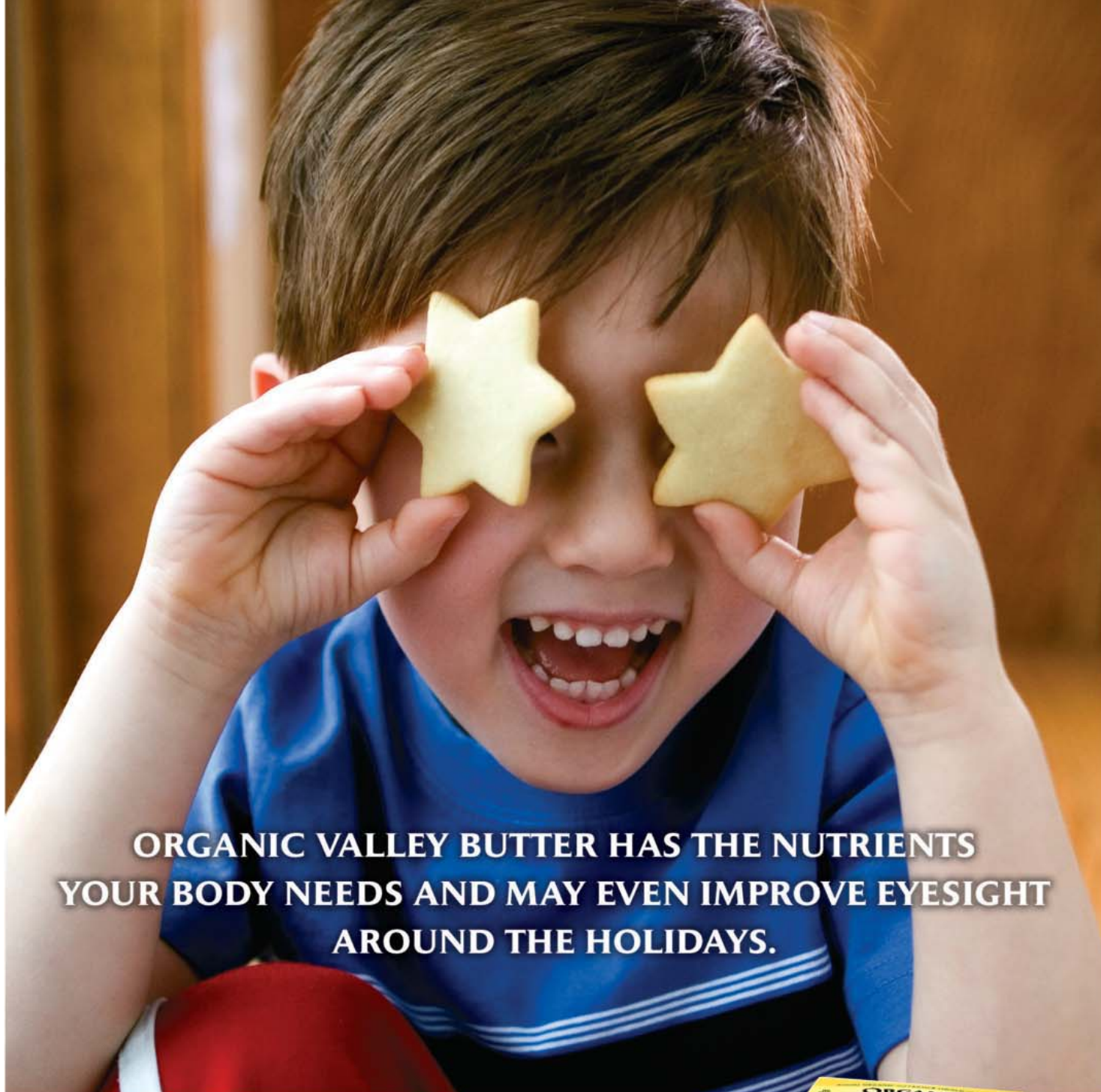
MARQUÉS DE MURRIETA RESERVA 2001 (\$22). An enthralling, classic rioja nose, with cherries, vanilla, leather, tobacco, black pepper, and iodine notes. Sweetish cherry fruit on the palate, with some licorice thrown in. Minerally and spicy. A very satisfying wine.

MARQUÉS DE RISCAL BARON DE CHIREL RESERVA 2001 (\$60). Caramel, vanilla, and black currant aromas soaring out of the glass. Full-bodied, with plenty of ripe black fruit and oak, but nicely balanced and restrained across the palate. In the modern style, but not over-the-top.

MARQUÉS DE RISCAL RESERVA 2001 (\$16). Wood spice, cherries, white pepper, and a bit of rioja sweatiness on the nose. Fleshy, tart blackberry fruit in the mouth, along with a healthy dash of oak. A little one-dimensional but pleasant, and an excellent value.

LA RIOJA ALTA GRAN RESERVA 904 1995 (\$50). A complex bouquet of cherry, strawberry, tobacco, cedar, and clove, along with a pleasant thwack of oak. Tart cherry fruit in the mouth, and though the wine doesn't carry a lot of weight, it seems to expand as it glides across the palate.

LA RIOJA ALTA VIÑA ARDANZA 1999 (\$33). Another winning nose, with aromas of strawberry jam, sweet tobacco, sawdust, and dill. The elegance carries over to the palate, which serves up more strawberry fruit along with a slightly salty note. Lots of refinement here but also a subtle, deceptive richness. —M.S.



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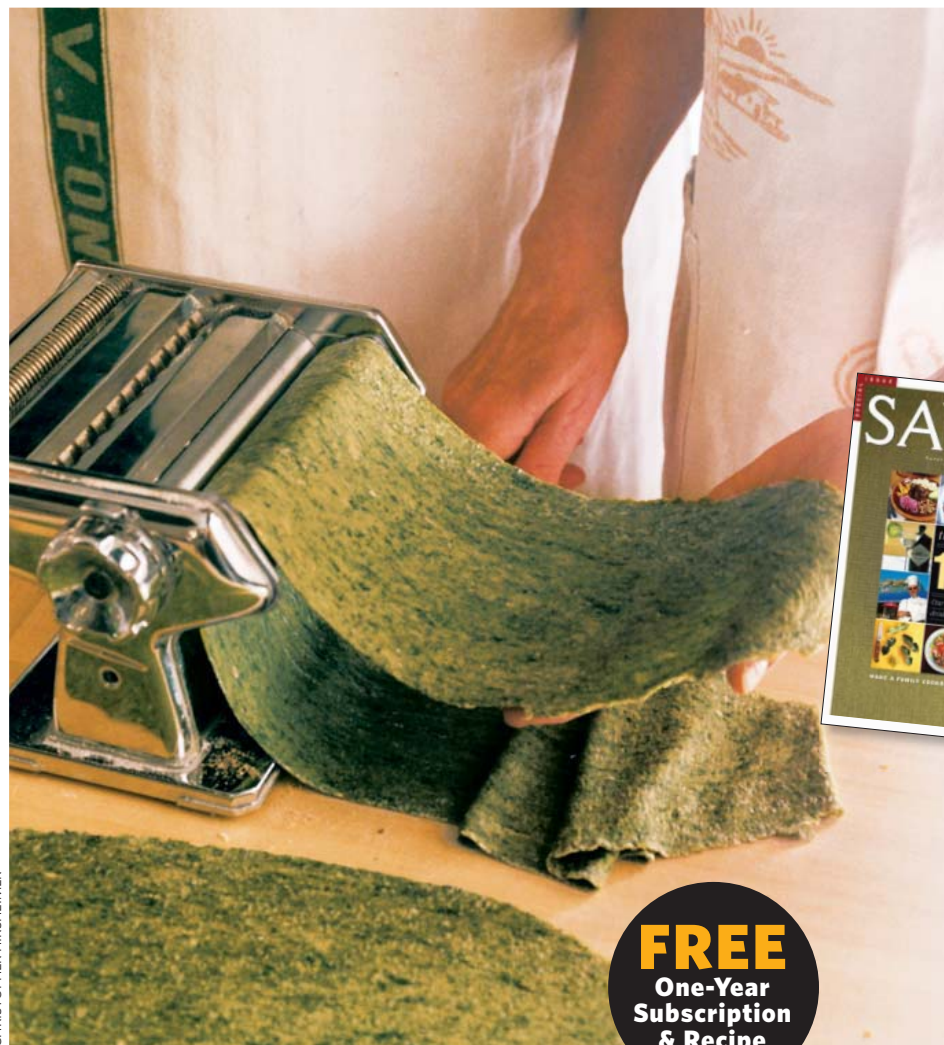
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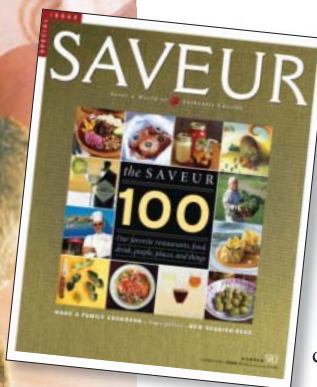
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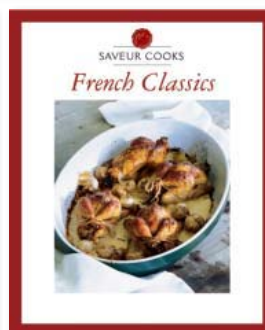
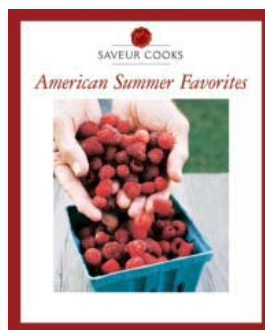
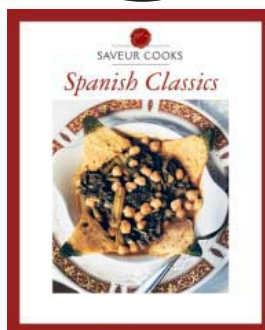
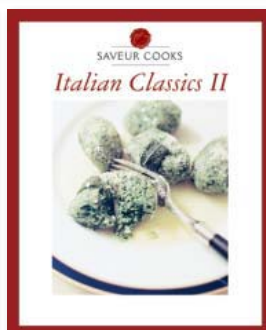
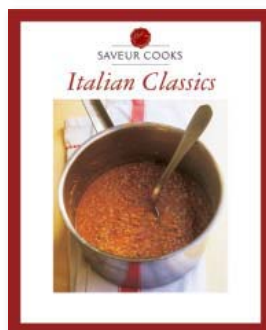
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R E P O R T E R

THE SIMPLE design of chopsticks, used daily at mealtimes by nearly a quarter of the world's population, belies the complexity of their history and the etiquette surrounding their use. For many Asians, chopsticks represent a lot more than just a device for transporting food from dish to mouth.

Exactly when and how chopsticks were invented remain a mystery. In the absence of hard evidence, legends abound. One popular story has it that chopsticks were born of desperation, perhaps as early as 3000 B.C. The version of the tale recounted in the fact-filled *Chopsticks! An Owner's Manual* by Hashi-san (Cognari Press, 1991)—the author's nom de plume means Mr. Chopsticks in Japanese—holds that a pair of poor Chinese farmers, wandering about the countryside, stole a piece of meat from a storehouse and then fled into the forest to cook it. Too hungry to let the meat cool, they pulled it apart with some twigs—supposedly the forerunners of chopsticks.

Having assumed a more refined form, chopsticks in much of China came to be called *kuaizi* (pronounced kwee tzoo), Mandarin for quick little fellows. The name refers to both their efficiency as utensils and the culinary style they inspired: the cutting of foods into small, easy-to-pick-up pieces that cook fast, thereby conserving fuel—a perennial concern in resource-strapped ancient China. (Chopsticks supposedly take their English name from the pidgin translation of *kuaizi*, “chop”, meaning fast.)

ARI TYE RADETSKY is a Denver-based writer whose work has appeared in the Los Angeles Times Magazine, Smart Money, and Spin. This is his first article for SAVEUR.



Joy Sticks

Chopsticks etiquette is little understood outside Asia

BY ARI TYE RADETSKY PHOTOGRAPHS BY BROOKE SLEZAK

By 400 B.C., chopsticks had begun to spread throughout China, in part because of an increasing adherence to the teachings of Confucius (551–479 B.C.), a vegetarian who believed that the presence of knives on the table served as a discomfiting reminder of the slaughter of animals. From the Middle Kingdom the implements traveled to other eastern and south-eastern Asian countries. By 200 B.C., chopsticks were in wide use in Korea; the Vietnamese adopted them sometime during the thousand-year Chinese occupation of their region, which began around 100 B.C. In Korea and Vietnam, the utensils are called *jeotgarak* (pronounced chot garak) and *dua* (dwah), respectively. (The implements never achieved lasting popularity in other parts of Asia, including Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand, where the fingers of one's right hand—and, increasingly, forks and spoons—are the favored utensils.)

It wasn't until the fifth century A.D. that chopsticks reached Japan, where they were initially employed strictly for ceremonial purposes. Religious leaders and government officials eventually began using chopsticks at the

table, and the practice caught on. Despite their relatively late arrival and the subsequent introduction of the fork, the Japanese embraced chopsticks wholeheartedly; even today most Japanese eat exclusively with chopsticks. (The Japanese name for the implements, *hashi*, or bridge, is a reference to their role in connecting one's plate with one's mouth.) In China, by contrast, a flat-bottomed spoon is often used in tandem with chopsticks, especially with soupy dishes; in Korea, a long-handled, shallow spoon is usually found on the table; and in Vietnam,

Korean, Japanese, and Chinese chopsticks, above (from left).

REPORTER

too, people tend to use a combination of spoons and chopsticks, depending on the dish.

Over the centuries, each of those four countries has developed its own, signature style of chopsticks. Chinese and Vietnamese chopsticks are the longest, about ten inches; they have squared or rounded sides from top to bottom and are usually made of bamboo, wood, or plastic. Japanese chopsticks are shorter, taper to a point at one end, and are almost always made of wood, although they are often coated in red or black lacquer. Korean chopsticks are similar in length to Japanese chopsticks but are thinner and flatter and typically made of stainless steel or silver.



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Learning how to manipulate chopsticks can be tricky, and for good reason: when the utensils are used, more than 30 joints and 50 muscles in the palm, forearm, wrist, and elbow are brought into play, and the movements required are much more involved than those for using a fork. Here's the proper technique:

1 | Rest one chopstick, nestled in crook of thumb, against ring finger and grip upper chopstick between tip of thumb and forefinger and middle finger. 2 | To open chopsticks, raise forefinger and middle finger, keeping bottom chopstick stationary. 3 | To close chopsticks, lower forefinger and middle finger.

NOBODY KNOWS precisely when and how chopsticks crossed the continents and the oceans. It is possible that Marco Polo, who is believed to have voyaged to China in the late 13th century, brought chopsticks to Europe, although he never mentions them in his writings. Some 300 years after Polo's expeditions, the Italian merchant Francesco Carletti traveled throughout Japan, and his journal contains one of the first known Western references to the utensils. Whenever it was that chopsticks arrived in the West, Asian standards of etiquette somehow got lost in translation.

JAPAN'S DISPOSABLE LEGACY

The details surrounding the invention of disposable chopsticks are sketchy, but it is generally believed that they were created in the mid-1800s in Japan's Yoshino County. That area, about 50 miles southeast of Osaka, is home to numerous cedar forests, which apparently supplied the wood for the first of these use-and-toss implements. Essentially a less refined, cheaper version of the traditional Japanese-style chopsticks, the new utensils eventually traveled outside the country. Today it is estimated that more than 45 billion disposable chopsticks are produced annually in China alone, requiring the destruction of an estimated 25 million trees—a number that disturbs environmental groups like the Japan Tropical Forest Action Network, China's Friends of Nature, and the international organization Friends of the Earth. The main suppliers of disposable chopsticks are now China, Indonesia, Chile, Pakistan, Thailand, and Vietnam, and deforestation in those countries is a concern. While it's unlikely that production of this type of chopstick will undergo a major downturn anytime soon, awareness of the ecological costs involved in their manufacture is growing. As a result, more and more diners in Asia are taking their own chopsticks to eateries that use disposable ones—in South Korea restaurants must obtain government approval to offer patrons disposable chopsticks—and chopsticks made of bamboo, a highly renewable resource, are becoming more popular. —A.T.R.

In the East there are myriad customs—some religious, some cultural—governing the use of chopsticks. Think twice, for instance, before you plant yours upright in a bowl of rice; Chinese and Japanese Buddhists do that at funerals and at family altars as a gesture of offering, so the practice is inappropriate at mealtimes. Similarly, when dining in Japan, never use chopsticks to pass food to another person; that act, too, disconcertingly resembles a funeral ritual.

After cremations, explains Gaku Homma—the former curator of the Lake Towada Folk Art Museum, in Misawa, Japan—the Japanese use chopsticks to pick the bones of the deceased from the ashes and pass them to family members before putting them into an urn. Japanese chopstick etiquette is so complex, in fact, that the culture has evolved precise names for transgressions of the subtlest nature: *neburi-bashi*, for example, denotes the rude practice of licking one's chopsticks; *sashi-bashi* is the equally frowned-upon act of stabbing a piece of food with one's chopstick.

Other common universal faux pas are gesturing with chopsticks, holding them above a platter while one tries to decide what to eat, and foraging with them to find the best morsels. The use of broken, mismatched, or multiple pairs of chopsticks during a meal is also discouraged, as is the placing of chopsticks directly on the table (use a chopsticks rest, or, if one isn't available, lay them parallel across a dish).

Another transgression those unfamiliar with chopstick etiquette often commit is to rub together disposable chopsticks (which were invented in Japan in the 19th century; see box, left) after separating them, supposedly to remove splinters. Your doing so in front of a chef can be taken as a sign that you think he or she is providing customers with cheap chopsticks and that the restaurant is of correspondingly poor quality. All of which goes to show that when it comes to chopsticks, the lines between Confucian enlightenment and confusion are splinter thin. 🐿





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Holiday Spice

Pfeffernuss cookies signify Christmas in Germany—and beyond

BY MARIA SPECK

AT MY FAMILY'S HOME IN Munich, an overflowing cookie plate was a highlight during the festive weeks of Advent, and my Greek mother, transplanted to Germany, outdid herself year after year. Buttery cutouts of stars and hearts, sugar-dusted vanilla crescents, and chewy coconut macaroons all made for a wonderful *deutsche Weihnacht* (German Christmas). But one time-honored favorite was always missing: the plump and intensely flavorful pfeffernüsse, found in virtually every home in Germany at Christmastime except ours. Mom, try as she might to assimilate, just couldn't bring herself to like them. I was 11, visiting a friend, when I had my first taste of the tiny, dark rounds enveloped in a silvery glaze and emphatically flavored with cardamom, cinnamon, and cloves. It was love

at first bite. Now, when the chilly nights of autumn give way to winter, I start to long for the cookies' spicy warmth.

Pfeffernüsse (the word is the plural of *Pfeffernuss*) are a special type of lebkuchen, or German gingerbread. The making of gingerbread is a hallowed process in Germany, where the methods have been refined over centuries. It's a tradition that has always been taken seriously. As early as 1643, strict rules authorized only certain bakers to sell gingerbread. Some Scandinavian countries also claim the cookies as their own. The Danish call them pebernødder, in Norway they're known as pepparkaker, and in Sweden they're called pepparkakor.

Pfeffernuss translates literally as "pepper nut". The name refers to the cookies' nutlike size and shape and to the *Pfefferländer*, the spice-rich countries of the East that supplied the more exotic ingredients for the cookies. In addition to cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, and a pinch of white or black pepper, traditional recipes call for honey and whole wheat flour, which impart sweetness and a subtle nuttiness, respectively, as well as almonds and lemon peel. As with other types of gingerbread, the recipe for pfeffernüsse can be adjusted for making confections that are either soft and chewy or hard and crunchy. Either way, Christmastime isn't complete without them. No offense, Mom. 🐿️



ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

RECIPE

Pfeffernüsse

(German Spice Cookies)

MAKES 3 DOZEN

These deliciously fragrant cookies provide a delightful rush of warm spices—and holiday cheer—when bitten into. For the best results, start with whole spices and grind them yourself.

- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/3 cup unsulfured molasses
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 2 eggs, at room temperature
- 2 cups whole wheat pastry flour (see page 99)
- 1/2 cup candied lemon peel, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup almonds, finely ground
- 3/4 tsp. freshly ground cinnamon
- 3/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 3/4 tsp. freshly ground cloves
- 3/4 tsp. freshly ground cardamom
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 2 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1-2 tbsp. light rum

1. Put honey, molasses, and butter into a small pot and cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until hot, 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool. Add eggs and whisk to combine. Put flour, half the lemon peel, almonds, cinnamon, pepper, cloves, cardamom, and baking powder into a large bowl and stir to combine. Add honey mixture and beat with a wooden spoon until well combined, to form a dough. Cover surface of dough with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight.

2. Preheat oven to 350°. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside. Lightly oil your palms with some of the oil. Form dough into 36 balls, each about 1" wide (the dough will be very sticky, so keep your hands lightly oiled while working). Divide dough balls between baking sheets, keeping them spaced 1" apart. Bake until slightly cracked on top and just firm to the touch, about 15 minutes. Transfer cookies to a wire rack and let cool slightly.

3. Meanwhile, whisk together confectioners' sugar, rum, and 5 tsp. hot water to make a smooth glaze. While cookies are still warm, use a pastry brush to coat each one with a layer of glaze. While the surfaces of the cookies are still moist with glaze, garnish each top with pieces of the remaining lemon peel. Set cookies aside to let cool completely. Eat right away or store in an airtight container, layered between sheets of waxed paper, for up to one week.

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Chicken Corn Tortilla Soup

Makes 8 servings

- 1 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 4 cups water
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 4 cups reduced-sodium canned chicken broth
- 16 ounces fresh or frozen white corn
- 1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chilies
- Corn tortilla chips
- 1 (8-ounce) package Cabot 50% Light Jalapeño Cheddar, grated



1. In saucepan, combine chicken breasts and water. Bring to gentle simmer and cook just until set in center.
2. Meanwhile, in medium skillet over medium heat, combine onion, garlic and oil; cook, stirring, until onions are tender. Set aside.
3. Transfer cooked chicken to plate to cool. Strain cooking liquid into another saucepan.
4. Add canned broth to cooking liquid and bring to simmer. Add corn and cook for 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and reserved onion mixture and cook until heated through.
5. In each of eight large soup bowls, arrange about 8 tortilla chips. Shred cooled chicken and divide among bowls. Ladle hot soup over chips and chicken; top with grated cheese.



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IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE, A BAKER AND HIS FRIENDS
CARRY ON THE SWEET RITUALS OF CHRISTMAS

BY NANCY COONS PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN FINK

PROVENCE

The Provençal breads known as *pompes à l'huile*. Facing page, midnight mass celebrants in traditional clothing.





PROVENCE

RECIPE

Saumon Poché à la Mayonnaise

(Whole Poached Salmon with Cold Mayonnaise)

SERVES 8-14

For a smooth and successful mayonnaise—one that doesn't separate—be sure that all the ingredients are at room temperature before you start whisking.

FOR THE MAYONNAISE:

- 2 egg yolks, at room temperature
- 1 tsp. dijon mustard
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup sunflower oil
- 1/2 cup olive oil

FOR THE SALMON:

- 1 whole cleaned salmon (about 8-9 lbs.)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 5 large sprigs flat-leaf parsley
- 2 dried bay leaves, lightly crushed
- 1 lemon, cut into thick slices
- 1/2 small yellow onion, thickly sliced
- 1 cup white wine

1. For the mayonnaise: Combine yolks, mustard, and salt and pepper to taste in a medium bowl and whisk to combine. (A mortar and pestle may also be used.) Slowly drizzle in oils while whisking constantly, to ensure smoothness. (You may add up to 5 tsp. water to thin the mayonnaise, if necessary.) Adjust the seasonings. Transfer mayonnaise to a small serving bowl and refrigerate until ready to use.

2. For the salmon: Season salmon inside and out with salt and pepper to taste. Arrange salmon on the rack of a large fish poacher (see page 99). Lower rack into poacher and layer top of salmon with parsley, bay leaves, lemon slices, and onions. Pour wine and 10-12 cups water around the sides of the salmon—not directly onto the fish. (The liquid should come halfway up the sides of the salmon.) Arrange poacher over 2 burners, cover, and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, until salmon is just cooked through, about 30 minutes. Remove poacher from heat, lift rack out of liquid, and carefully set rack over the poacher at a slant to let drain and cool slightly. Transfer salmon to a large platter and serve at room temperature with chilled mayonnaise on the side.

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AT THE RICH
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OF A
PROVENCE
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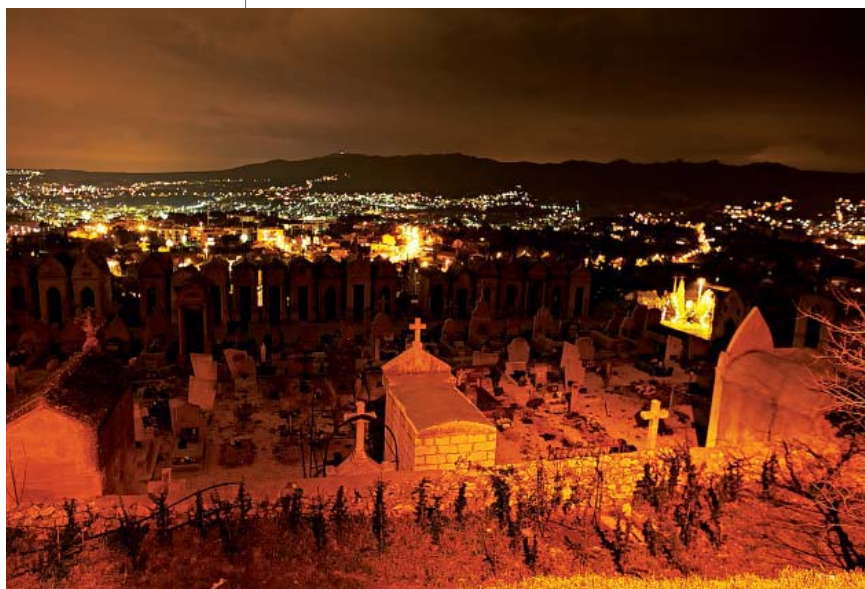
Poached salmon, facing page. Below, the view from the Chapelle Notre Dame du Château, where Allauch's Nativity procession starts.

I don't have *time*! I don't have *time* to talk. *Do you understand me?*"

I nod and cower behind a rainbow-colored tower of candied fruits. It's the night before Christmas in Allauch, a Provençal hill town overlooking Marseille and France's Mediterranean coast, and Georges Testa is stressed. A devotee of local traditions and the third-generation owner of the highly regarded Moulin Bleu confectionery and tea-room—founded in 1948 by his maternal grandfather, Francis Eymery—Testa has promised to give me a firsthand look at the rich and ancient customs surrounding Christmas in Provence. Now he's having second thoughts.

An archetypal volatile southerner, Testa chain-smokes and vents his temper in even the mellowest of circumstances, but at the moment he has good reason to yell. He has been working around the clock for days to supply his customers with classic Christmas sweets: nougat (a Provençal confection made of almonds and honey); casse-dents ("teeth-breakers", a biscotti-like cookie); suce miel (honey taffy); and the sponge cake Yule logs called bûches de Noël. Those and other local specialties like honey, olive oil, and pastis have been artfully displayed alongside holly and mistletoe garlands on the room's oak tables and marble countertops. It is, after all, Christmastime, the Moulin's busiest season.

There is much to do after work, too. Like all good



PROVENCE



Provençaux, Testa will observe the birth of Christ tonight with a “fast” meal called either the *repas maigre*, “lean meal”, or, paradoxically, the *gros souper*, “big supper”. There will be seven meatless dishes, including brandade de morue (salt cod pounded with garlic and oil), vegetable gratins, and a whole poached fish. Then he must harness a few of his donkeys, which will take part in Allauch’s *pastorale*—a theatrical representation of the Nativity that culminates in a procession known as the Descent of the Shepherds. A midnight mass with his neighbors, many dressed in old-fashioned Provençal kerchiefs, mobcaps, and smocks, comes next, followed by the *repas gras*, “fat meal”, typically a feast of roasted meats that begins as late as two in the morning.

BEFORE TESTA CAN hang up his apron for the day, though, he must finish some last-minute baking, in-

NANCY COONS, a writer based in France’s Lorraine region, is a regular contributor to SAVEUR. Her novel *The Feasting Season*, set partly in Provence, will be published by Algonquin Books this spring.

Squash gratin, above. Facing page, from top, a santon display at Aubagne’s Christmas market; a santonnier practicing his art.

THE “FAT MEAL” OF ROASTED MEATS BEGINS AS LATE AS TWO IN THE MORNING

cluding several hundred sweet olive oil breads called *pompes à l’huile*. A cherished local favorite, these light, golden rounds are the most important component of the sacred 13 desserts (see box, page 52) that accompany Christmas meals. I follow as Testa heads downstairs to his hot, chaotic kitchen, where a few of his old pals, who help him on this busy day every year, focus on the *pompes*, leaving the more complicated jobs to the regular employees.

Christian Hébrard mans the ovens; Jean-Claude Merle keeps track of the baking time; and Robert Viatore brushes the finished loaves with hot water to keep them moist. At the dough board, Testa cuts a series of symbolic slits in the next batch of *pompes*. When I ask why, he bristles and then draws a calming breath. “These represent the five fingers of man’s hand, his labors for the year,” he explains. “He grew the grain, he ground the flour, he pressed the olive oil. On Christmas, we serve it to every member of the household, every person, every beast. It’s (continued on page 50)

RECIPE

Gratin de Cource

(Squash Gratin)

SERVES 8-10

When making her version of this dish, Chantal Bourrely uses a French pumpkin called *potiron*. A combination of acorn and butternut squash makes a good substitute.

- 2 large butternut squash (5-6 lbs.), peeled, seeded, and cut into 1½" chunks
- 1 large acorn squash (about 2 lbs.), peeled, seeded, and cut into 1½" chunks
- Salt
- 3 medium yukon gold potatoes (about 1¾ lbs.), peeled, halved lengthwise, and thickly sliced
- 8 cloves garlic, chopped
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups milk
- 4 cups grated gruyère

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Put the butternut and acorn squash into a large pot, cover with salted water, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, partially covered, until squash are tender, about 20 minutes. Drain well, pressing out any excess water. (“Otherwise it gives more and more water and thins the sauce,” says Bourrely.) Meanwhile, put potatoes into a large pot, cover with salted water, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until just tender, about 10 minutes. Drain.

2. Put squash into a large bowl and mash coarsely with a potato masher. Add the drained potatoes, garlic, and salt and pepper to taste and gently fold together. Transfer squash mixture to a deep 9" x 14" roasting pan or baking dish. Pour milk evenly over top and sprinkle with cheese. Bake until golden brown and bubbly, about 30 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving.



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BIRTH OF THE LITTLE SAINTS

When the Revolution swept through France in the late 1700s, the beloved Provençal tradition of townspeople's reenacting the Nativity during Christmas Eve mass was banned. Locals circumvented the law by molding miniature clay versions of the infant Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and displaying the *santons*, "little saints", in their homes. Nowadays in Provence, *santons*, their features carved and painted with a watchmaker's precision, are essential to the holidays. Practically every family in the region will set up a *santon* crèche—often in place of a Christmas tree—and new figurines are collected and presented as gifts each year. Aubagne, the capital of *santon* makers (thanks to its fine natural clay), located about six miles southeast of Allauch, hosts a fair every December devoted to the craft. Booths lining the

cours Foch, a main thoroughfare, entice shoppers with vivid displays of shepherds, angels, magi, and sheep. There are other figures, too—among them the lumberjack, the ragman, the fishmonger, the milkmaid, and even the village idiot. Around the corner from the fair, in a booth on the esplanade Charles de Gaulle, sits a permanent exhibit of *santons*—transformed during the Christmas season into a large crèche—representing characters from the films of the director and playwright Marcel Pagnol, who was born in Aubagne. And preeners, take note: should you wish to immortalize yourself in a *portrait-santon* for the mantel, Aubagne-based ceramist Daniel Scaturro, winner of the prestigious Meilleur Ouvrier de France award for his work, takes commissions. Information: 33/442 03 49 98. —N.C.







The Descent of the Shepherds ends at the Église Saint Sébastien, in the main square; a screen shows the midnight mass to a spillover crowd.

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(continued from page 46) the fruit of our labors.”

There’s hardly room to move, so I slip into a corner with Testa’s ever present cocker spaniel, aptly named Vadrouille (Loiters). It’s now one in the afternoon, and the dozen or so workers are hungry. Someone opens a bottle of pastis and begins filling plastic holiday-motif cups. Viatore lifts the lid on a barrel-size pot of bubbling pieds et paquets, a winey stew of sheep’s feet and tripe that rivals bouillabaisse as Marseille’s best-loved dish.

Wait a minute; aren’t we in ultra-Catholic Provence, where locals fast—well, at least abstain from eating meat—on Christmas Eve? Testa’s mother, Ginette, a serene woman with a gracious air, who works in the confectionery upstairs, appears on the staircase, and I whisper my question to her. “Yes, it’s always been so,” she replies. “We may lose the practice of religion, but here in Provence, we still follow a day of fasting and abstinence.” Even as she speaks, ladlefuls of the steaming stew are being dished onto plates and a beaming man in green overalls enters the room with a salt-cured ham slung over his back. It’s another of Testa’s friends, Michel

Above, clockwise from left, Monique Merle, Michel Bourrely, Fanny Apicella, Chantal Bourrely, Georges Testa, Jean-Claude Merle. Facing page, pompes à l’huile.

**SOMEONE
OPENS A
BOTTLE OF
PASTIS AS
STEW IS
LADLED
ONTO PLATES**

Bourrely. Everyone cheers as if he were Santa Claus.

Ginette just glances discreetly away, so I pull up a chair. As I savor the pungent, porky tripe and nibble on a slab of ham, Testa joins in the banter, lapsing into the rarely used Provençal dialect. The lunch has grown into a full-fledged party by the time Merle’s wife, Monique, Bourrely’s sister-in-law Chantal, and Fanny Apicella, all close friends of Testa’s, show up. I swallow guiltily; I promised to help the three of them prepare the meals that will bookend midnight mass tonight and am running late.

A SHORT WALK FROM the Moulin Bleu is the Testa house, which Georges shares with his mother and maternal grandmother, Magdeleine, who is 99. Magdeleine founded the business with her husband, who taught Testa his craft. (Staff members whisper that Testa’s brother, Pierre, started a rival confectionery, which he eventually sold; Testa’s sister, Marie-Paule, chose another career.) In the middle of the large, welcoming kitchen, a long dining table is covered with an oilcloth; at the far end stands an

PROVENCE

enormous crèche, with tiny stone cottages and miniature hillsides sprouting rosemary “trees” and thyme “bushes”, but no figurines.

Monique, Chantal, and Fanny get right to work, and I follow suit, seeding pumpkin for a gratin, washing spinach for an omelette, and peeling carrots for an anchoïade (an anchovy dip). Monique’s salty talk has everyone doubled over laughing: “Georges? His mother wanted me to marry him, can you believe it? What a life!” She gives a mock shudder and throws a fistful of pepper into the spinach she is sautéing. “But don’t listen to me. He’s a pain, a troublemaker, but his heart is as big as this.” She spreads her hands wide.

Chantal pulls a package of fish out of the fridge. We are only 30 minutes from the Vieux Port in old Marseille, where fishermen tie up at the pier every morning with boatloads of monkfish, sea bass, crayfish, and squid. What will the package hold? The women reveal the contents with proud smiles: salmon, from the North Atlantic! None of the everyday local catch for the holidays this

“TESTA’S A TROUBLE-MAKER,” SAYS MONIQUE, “BUT HIS HEART IS AS BIG AS THIS.” SHE SPREADS HER HANDS WIDE

year. They season it, dress it with bay leaves, parsley, and lemon slices, and then put it into a fish poacher.

Earlier, Testa has started a fire in the fireplace and fitted a turkey stuffed with a whole foie gras on an electric rotisserie. It will be the centerpiece of the *repas gras*. The flames have begun to burnish the skin, and bits of the liver, which baste the bird from within, drip onto the sizzling-hot pan underneath. I pop a morsel into my mouth and it dissolves, salty-sweet.

Next, the table must be set, which entails its own

RECIPE

Pompe à l’Huile

(Sweet Olive Oil Bread)

MAKES ONE 12" BRIOCHE

Pompe à l’huile, a sweet olive oil bread that’s a cross between a brioche and a focaccia, is at the center of the spiritual food traditions that make a Christmas in Provence like none other in the world. This version of Georges Testa’s recipe uses a liquid starter called a *poolish*—a mixture of water, a little flour, usually some sugar, and yeast that’s allowed to ferment—to give the bread a unique flavor.

3 3/4 cups flour
1/3 cup plus 1 tbsp. sugar
1 7-gram package active dry yeast
3/4 cup plus 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
2 tsp. salt

1. Make a poolish: Put 1 1/2 cups of the flour, sugar, yeast, and 1 cup warm water into a large bowl and stir well with a wooden spoon to combine. Let the mixture sit in a warm spot until bubbly, about 30 minutes.

2. Add remaining flour, 3/4 cup oil, and salt to the poolish and stir until a dough forms. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic, 5–7 minutes. Grease a large clean bowl with the remaining oil, place dough in the bottom, and cover with a clean towel. Set the dough aside in a warm spot to let rise until doubled in bulk, 3–4 hours.

3. Preheat oven to 400°. Gently turn dough out onto a large sheet of parchment paper and gently stretch it with your fingers to form a 12" circle. Using a small, sharp knife, cut out five 2"-long slits, each about 1" wide, starting from the center of the bread and cutting toward the edge, so that the dough will resemble a sand dollar (discard dough scraps or bake them separately as a cook’s-bonus nibble). Using your fingers, gently stretch the holes open a little wider so that they won’t close up completely when bread is baked. Carefully transfer the dough—on the parchment paper—to a large baking sheet and bake until golden brown and puffed, about 15 minutes. Remove the bread from the oven and immediately brush the top and sides with 2 tbsp. hot water to soften the crust. Transfer the bread to a rack to let cool, or serve warm, if you like. (Remember to tear the bread into pieces—tradition says that cutting it might sever your friendship with the people at the table.)



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rituals. The women snap and smooth three cloths into place, one overlapping the other. "This one is for the Father, this one is for the Son, and this one is for the Holy Spirit," Chantal tells me. Then they put a cloth, along with three white candles symbolizing the Holy Trinity, on the buffet that will hold the 13 desserts. The three of them paw through the cupboards to find the right bowls and fill them not with rich pastries but with nuts, dried fruits, fresh seasonal fruits, and nougat. "Figs, that makes seven," Chantal says, counting each dessert as it is set out. "Raisins, that's eight...." On a nearby windowsill, grains of wheat planted in pots a few weeks ago bloom brilliantly green and stiff. Those will go on the main table. Unlike in the north of France, where I live, the Christmas season in Provence begins on December 4, Sainte Barbe's day, with the cus-



Facing page, clockwise from top left: celery salad; Allauch at dusk; Georges Testa making bûches de Noël; sheep readied for the Descent of the Shepherds.

TESTA USES A MORTAR AND PESTLE TO PREPARE A GOLDEN SWELL OF MAYONNAISE TO GO WITH THE POACHED SALMON

METHOD

Salade de Céleri

(Celery Salad)

This celery salad is crisp, refreshing, and simple to prepare. Don't neglect to mix in the celery leaves (which, unfortunately, are often discarded); they contribute significantly to the look and taste of the salad. Whisk together 1 tbsp. white wine vinegar, 1 tsp. dijon mustard, and salt and freshly ground pepper to taste in a large salad bowl. Drizzle in 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil while whisking constantly, to form a smooth and tart dressing. Set aside. Pluck all the leaves from 1 bunch celery; set aside. Remove the outer ribs of the celery. (Save the innermost ribs from the core of the bunch for another use.) Roughly chop the celery ribs into 1/2"-3/4" pieces. Add celery to bowl with dressing and toss well to coat. Adjust the seasonings. Serves 6.

tomary sowing of wheat and lentils. If the seeds flourish by Christmas Eve, good luck is guaranteed for the year.

We finish the rest of the preparations just in time to clean up and change our clothes. At eight o'clock, a dozen friends and relatives gather in the kitchen, dressed in their holiday finery. Having finally turned off the ovens at the Moulin Bleu, Testa has spent the past half hour at the crèche, now populated by clay figurines called *santons* (see box, page 47). There are villagers, shepherds, and angels, and the Holy Family is in place except for one member: the manger lies empty, an unlit candle set before it.

At the counter, Testa uses a mortar and pestle to prepare a golden swell of fresh mayonnaise to accompany the poached salmon. When I ask him why the *gros souper* involves precisely seven dishes, he deadpans, "They represent either the seven plagues of Egypt or the seven deadly sins. Up to you to choose."

Monique squints at him. "I thought they were the seven sufferings of Mary, non?"

We move to the table, where Testa stands and raises his glass: "If we won't be more, this time next year let us at least not be fewer!" After the toast, we begin eating. The meal is anything but lean: the cauliflower gratin is rich with béchamel, the pumpkin one tangy with garlic and cheese; and this is the first time I've

13 SYMBOLS OF CHRISTMAS

Throughout Provence, the *gros souper* on Christmas Eve usually ends with the famed 13 desserts. Though the phrase may bring to mind a table laden with creamy gâteaux or rich pastries, the reality is more austere—and rife with symbolism. The presentation of the 13 desserts, a tradition traceable to the 18th century if not earlier, is said to represent Christ and the 12 apostles. Among the "desserts" are figs, raisins, almonds, and walnuts, each of which reflects the robe colors of the four mendicant religious orders—Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite, and Augustinian, respectively. There are also two types of nougat: soft white for the white penitents and brittle dark for the dark ones (some say they represent the forces of good and evil). Dates

stand for Christ himself, and seasonal fruits like mandarin oranges, pears, apples, and winter melon usually round out the assortment, along with a specialty item that varies from town to town. In Allauch, for example, it is the round bread called *pompe à l'huile* (see recipe, page 51); in Aix-en-Provence, it's the popular orange blossom-flavored almond confections called *calissons*. Custom holds that all the desserts, generally accompanied by *vin cuit*, a sweet wine, must be served at the same time and that everyone must sample at least a little of each one. They are usually offered again after midnight mass and left out for three days, to be shared with visitors and, some say, the spirits of one's ancestors and the Holy Family. —N.C.



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tasted anchoïade made with butter, not olive oil, the crushed anchovies blending into a slick, salty dip.

Spirits are high, and the air is thick with boisterous repartee. We hardly notice when the party thins, but suddenly Chantal's husband, Jean-Marc, and their 16-year-old son, Julien, reappear dressed as Provençal shepherds, in woolen capes, leggings, and drooping hats. If we don't hurry, they tell us, we'll be late for the festivities. (Allauch townspeople who participate in the evening's events tend to save the 13 desserts for after mass, though many Provençaux serve them at the *gros souper*.) There is a scramble for coats, crooks, and whips, and we stream out the door breathing garlic and wine fumes into the night air.

THE USUALLY QUIET village is buzzing with activity as townspeople and tourists crowd the procession route, which begins at the Chapelle Notre Dame du Château, on Allauch's highest point, and ends at the Église Saint Sébastien, in the main square. Below us sparkles the valley, the whole of Marseille, and the coastline beyond. At 11

Testa's *gros souper* (the first of two dinners) includes this anchoïade, above, an anchovy dip made with butter instead of olive oil.

AFTER
MANY
BOTTLES OF
GIGONDAS,
IT'S TIME AT
LAST FOR
THE 13
DESSERTS

o'clock, a rally of pipes and drums booms over loudspeakers, and the *pastorale* begins; powerful spotlights illuminate each scene for the audience far below. The pageant is sung and spoken in rhyming couplets of Provençal dialect. I don't understand much, nor do the young locals present, but the older ones nod, misty eyed. After it's over, the shepherds and actors start to move toward the church. I fall in behind the donkey carts and a flock of bleating sheep. Once in the building's vast nave, I spot Testa's mother in a ruffled bonnet, taking her place in the choir, led by her son Pierre.

After the midnight mass, which is replete with carols, prayers, and murmured chants, we arrive once again in Testa's kitchen. Testa flicks his lighter and touches the flame to the candle at the heart of the crèche, illuminating a tiny *santon* baby that has appeared, mysteriously, in the manger. We all applaud the arrival of the "Petit Jésus".

Monique carves thin slices of the roast turkey and serves crumbling chunks of the caramelized foie gras stuffing, while Michel trails behind, ladling drippings. There are no potatoes or vegetables. It's as if the *gros souper* had functioned as a massive starter course. After many bottles of gigondas and some roquefort and camembert smeared on bits of bread, it's time at last for the 13 desserts. The bowls are brought to the table, and we hammer off chunks of brittle black nougat, crack walnuts and hazelnuts, pick dates from branches, and peel juicy mandarins.

In a final ritual, the youngest person in the room stands. This year it is 15-year-old Laurent Merle, Monique and Jean-Claude's son. "Who is the oldest present?" he asks. Joe, another friend at the table, nobly admits to it. Laurent grins and raises the pompe à l'huile high and then brings it down on Joe's head, splitting it apart.

Everyone, including Testa, laughs. "We never cut the pompe à l'huile," he explains. "That could cut the friendship." We pass the pieces around, tearing off smaller chunks. Vadrouille gets his share, and Testa also saves some for the donkeys.

Next, gifts are exchanged. There is even a rhododen-

METHOD

Anchoïade

(Anchovy Dip with Crudités)

In this robust dip, salty crushed anchovies blend with sweet butter into a pungent combination—a perfect counterpoint to the sweetness of plain raw and cooked vegetables, also called crudités. Combine 10 tbsp. butter and the drained contents of a 300-ml (about 3 oz.) jar of boneless anchovy filets in a small saucepan. Heat over medium heat, crushing and stirring the anchovies with a fork as butter melts. Cook, stirring with the fork, until hot throughout, 3–4 minutes. Transfer the anchoïade to a medium bowl and serve at room temperature with an assortment of crudités, such as crunchy celery and carrot sticks, crisp and bitter endive leaves, juicy tomato wedges, and smooth and starchy boiled potatoes, as well as hard-cooked eggs. Makes about 1 cup.



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PROVENCE

dron for me. Bottles of champagne are opened, as well as one of *vin cuit*, a sweet local red wine made from grape juice that's been cooked prior to fermentation, but before I get any of either, Monique raises a finger at me and disappears. She returns with an old juice jar and two tiny glasses. "Thyme liqueur," she says, handing me a glass of the thick, pale gold liquid. "My own." It is sweet and piney and redolent of the *garrigue*, the surrounding brush-covered Provençal hills where wild thyme crunches underfoot. It brings tears to my eyes. "Voilà," she says. "You see? Ça, ça, c'est la Provence."

"VOILÀ,"
SAYS
MONIQUE.
"YOU SEE?
ÇA, ÇA,
C'EST LA
PROVENCE"

I AM SLOW TO RISE on Christmas Day. When I arrive at the Moulin Bleu, Testa is already there, manning the cash register. A steady stream of customers picks up chocolates, yet more pompes, and preordered bûches de Noël. For Testa, the holiday baking is done, but he's still working. Today, though, he wears a ghost of a smile. I accept it, along with a piece of pompe à l'huile that he offers me—torn, not cut. 

THE PANTRY, page 99: Sources for a fish poacher and traditional Provençal desserts.

THE GUIDE

PROVENCE

COUNTRY CODE: 33

EXCHANGE RATE: 0.80 euro = \$1

Dinner with drinks, tax, and tip:

EXPENSIVE Over \$40 MODERATE \$20–\$40 INEXPENSIVE Under \$20

Marseille's international airport lies about 20 miles northwest of Allauch. There is regular high-speed train service from Paris and the northeast arriving in Marseille's central station, Gare St-Charles. From either arrival point, rent a car and aim for Aubagne on the A-50; exit at La Valentine, double back northwest on the D-4, and follow signs north on the D-908 toward Plan-de-Cuques and Allauch.

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL LES CIGALES *Route Enco de Botte, 13190 Allauch (491 68 17 07; www.hotel-lescigales.fr). Rates: \$87–\$118 double. Table d'hôte dinners by reservation.* Tucked amid the suburbs between Marseille and Allauch, this centuries-old *mas* (country house) has been converted into a hotel with six rooms and one suite, all decorated in traditional Provençal style. In the winter, breakfast is served by a crackling fire; in the summer, under parasols on the garden terrace, surrounded by almond trees and the singing cicadas the establishment is named for. The hotel has a bar and a pool, and rooms are air-conditioned.

WHERE TO EAT

L'AUBERGE DES MOULINS 8 *rue des Moulins, 13190 Allauch (491 68 74 99). Closed Sunday evening, Tuesday evening, and Wednesday all day. Lunch/dinner: expensive.* Run by Allauch native Jean-Philippe Nicolao, this rustic-chic restaurant serves hearty, ambitious Provençal fare that puts modern twists on local dishes and products. The winter menu includes game dishes like terrine of partridge. Nicolao has assembled an excellent selection of regional wines.

L'HOSTELLERIE 12 *rue Pierre-Queirel, place du Village (across from the church), 13190 Allauch (491 68 79 97). Closed Monday. Lunch: inexpensive. Dinner: moderate.* This bistro serves as the headquarters for those participants in the Allauch *pastorale* who run the Descent of the Shepherds. In warm weather, you can eat beneath plane trees on the terrace facing the town square, but at Christmastime you'll want to ask for a table in the back room by the roaring fire, where you can watch your lamb chops sizzle over the coals. The

menu also offers generous lunch salads, pastas, and grilled meats.

WHAT TO DO

AIX-EN-PROVENCE CHRISTMAS MARKET *November 24–December 26.* The town of Aix, 14 miles north of Allauch, hosts a number of *marchés de Noël*, including arts-and-crafts stands along the chic *cours Mirabeau* and also a *marché des treize desserts*, where you can buy the walnuts, figs, and local sweets (especially the renowned ground-almond calissons) that make up the ritual 13 desserts.

LA DESCENTE DES BERGERS *Starting at the Chapelle Notre Dame du Château, Allauch, December 24, around 10:30 P.M. Information: 491 10 49 20.* This sound-and-light spectacle marks the culmination of Allauch's *pastorale*, in which villagers reenact the Nativity. The Descent of the Shepherds consists of a procession of sheep, donkeys, and townspeople in traditional costume, who proceed from the chapel at the highest point in the village down to the Église Saint Sébastien, in the main square. Afterward, the celebration of the midnight mass is projected on the church façade for those who can't squeeze into the church itself.

EXPLORING MARSEILLE The city limits of Marseille lie a stone's throw south of Allauch, and local buses or a 20-minute drive takes you

into the center of that thriving port city. A Christmas market with chalet stands selling gifts and holiday treats is set up on the Vieux Port from mid-November until Christmas Eve. The *marché aux poissons* (fish market) takes place every morning at the Vieux Port's edge, when the fishermen arrive with the night's catch.

LE MOULIN BLEU 7 *cours du 11 Novembre, 13190 Allauch (491 68 19 06). Closed Monday mornings.* Georges Testa's 58-year-old confectionery is described by its owner as a "defender of Provençal food and tradition", and the place unarguably lives up to that moniker. The shop doubles as a tea-room and a gourmet grocery, but Provençal sweets are its *raison d'être*.

LE SOUPER CALENDAL/ GROS SOUPER *Espace François Mitterrand, Allauch, December 15 and 16. Information: 491 10 49 20.* Sponsored by Les Amis d'Allauch, this traditional *repas maigre*, "lean meal", features storytelling, participants in traditional dress, and the 13 desserts—a public celebration of a hallowed Provençal ritual.

LA VEILLÉE CALENDALE *Église de la Bourdonnière, Logis Neuf, Allauch. Information: 491 10 49 20.* Shortly before Christmas, Le Groupe Saint-Éloi hosts an evening of Provençal *chants de Noël* (carols) and folk dancing, as well as a ceremonial presentation of the 13 desserts.

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Tamarind adds tartness—and intrigue—to many of the world's favorite dishes

by Madhur Jaffrey photographs by André Baranowski and Heidi Swanson

THE GRANDEST OF THE TREES in our family compound in Delhi when I was a child was the tamarind. Our mulberry trees, though immense in height, had an untidy structure. Our beloved jujube tree, while it possessed an umbrella-like shape that made it ideal for climbing, was comparatively short and squat. But the towering, 60-foot-tall tamarind, with its almost perfect oval form and its lacy green leaves, was inviolable, beyond comparison in its magnificence.

Our tamarind tree was home to hundreds of red-beaked green parrots, and, during family weddings, cooking tents were set up beneath its sheltering branches. It was also where we grandchildren—there were more than two dozen of us—gathered with long bamboo poles to whack the tree's sturdy branches, knocking loose

hundreds of tan-brown seed pods that would patter to the ground like rain. Then, sitting on the lawn, we would crack the brittle skin off, one fruit at a time, pop some of the sticky flesh into our mouths, and slowly chew it, allowing the sourness to jangle our teeth and the accompanying sweetness to take the pain away. It was yin and yang in one joyful bite.

THE FRUIT OF THE TAMARIND is, of course, far more than a childhood indulgence. It is a revered souring agent in the cooking of the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia; the ingredient also

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TAMARIND

plays a role in many Latin American and African dishes. Tamarind even appears in a few American and European foodstuffs as well: it is, for instance, the element that gives Worcestershire sauce its appealing tart note (see page 94). The reason for this nearly global veneration is simple: the flesh of the ripe tamarind pod has more acid and more sugar than that of almost any other fruit in the world—a combination that lends balance to countless dishes.

I had barely grown tall enough to reach my mother's knees when I first watched her soak the peeled sticky brown tamarind flesh in hot water and strain the pulp to remove the small, shiny black seeds and stringy fibers. The smooth, pectin-rich extract that she produced was often sweetened with sugar and seasoned with roasted cumin, mint, ginger, and cayenne to make a versatile chutney, which would be drizzled over dozens of snack foods, like dahi baras—fluffy split pea dumplings that bob in beaten yogurt. This chutney could also be combined with sliced bananas; in our family, that mixture was doled out at every wedding banquet, as tradition demanded. In South India, where in many households a large ball of tamarind pulp is kept in the kitchen in an earthenware pot, the ingredient finds its way into sambar, a thick, rich dal (Indian lentil) and vegetable stew, and, perhaps most deliciously, into rasam, a sour-spicy liquid side dish that is thought to function as a digestive.

Tamarindus indica is a tropical and subtropical leguminous tree that can bear up to 500 pounds of fruit a year. It is thought to have origi-

The flesh of the ripe pod is remarkable: it has more acid and more sugar than almost *any other fruit* in the world

nated in Africa but spread to India in ancient times, possibly when the landmasses were still connected. Tamarind has been used in Indian cooking for at least 2,000 years. By A.D. 150, it had begun to appear in sauces for spit-roasted and fried meats; eventually it found its way into curries, chutneys, drinks, and soups. Like many Indian foods, tamarind has also been prized at various points in history for its purported medicinal value. It has been used to reduce fevers (though, interestingly, sleeping under the tree itself is believed to *cause* fevers); it is supposed to cool the body and quench thirst; it has been prescribed as a laxative and thought to prevent scurvy; its leaves and flowers are employed in eyewashes as an antiseptic; it is taken to treat ulcers; and it is said to enhance sexual enjoyment in women.

TODAY THE FRUIT OF THE tamarind tree—whose name comes from the Arabic *tamar-u'l-Hind*, “date of India”, or possibly from the Persian variant, *tamar-i-Hindi*—is eaten throughout much of the tropical and subtropical world. The ethnic Chinese in Malaysia make a lip-smacking dish called babi masak asam by braising pork with tamarind, chiles, shallots, and a sweet, fermented soybean paste called tauco. In Thailand and parts of Indonesia, a small quantity of tamarind extract goes into many coconut milk-based curries, offsetting the natural sweetness of the coconut. In the

METHODS

Agua de Tamarindo

(Sweet Tamarind Drink)

This recipe comes from Espi and Armando Araiza, two Mexican-American home cooks. Sweet, tart, and highly refreshing, the drink (facing page, top left) belongs to a family of Mexican chilled drinks called aguas frescas. Rinse 1 lb. fresh tamarind pods (see page 99). Bring 2 quarts water to a boil in a medium pot; add pods. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, until just tender and the water is brown, about 15 minutes. Strain water through a fine sieve into a 3-quart pitcher. Remove and discard skin from each pod. Using your hands, place as much pulp as possible from the softened fruit in a blender, discarding the seeds and fibers. Add 2 cups of the strained tamarind liquid to blender; purée until smooth. Strain purée through a sieve into the pitcher. Add 1 quart water and enough sugar to make the liquid sweet but still tart—about 1 cup should do—and stir well. Serve agua de tamarindo over ice. Makes about 3 quarts.

Rasam

(Spicy Tomato and Tamarind Soup)

In South India, rasam (facing page, top right)—the probable precursor to muligatawny soup—is often served at the end of a meal. Grind 1 tbsp. cumin seeds, 1½ tsp. black peppercorns, and 20 fresh curry leaves (see page 99) in a spice grinder. Set aside. Put 3 tbsp. tamarind extract (see box, page 62), 2 tsp. salt, and 1 quart water into a pot over medium-high heat and stir; bring to a boil. Add ground spices and 2 plum tomatoes cut into thin wedges, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until tomatoes are soft, about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, heat 4 tsp. canola oil in a pot over medium-high heat. Add ¼ tsp. black mustard seeds and cook until they pop. Add, in quick succession, 20 fresh curry leaves, ¼ tsp. whole fenugreek seeds (see page 99), and 3 stemmed halved dried chiles de árbol and cook until fenugreek turns golden, 3–5 seconds. Pour spices and oil into soup. Serve at once. Serves 4.

Tamarind-Glazed Pork Chops

These sweet and sticky pork chops (facing page, bottom left) go well with mashed potatoes. Set a rack 4" from broiler; preheat. Mix together 3 cups tamarind extract (see sidebar, page 62), 1 cup plus 2 tbsp. sugar, 1 cup fresh orange juice, 6 tbsp. soy sauce, 1 tbsp. finely grated ginger, and 6 cloves finely chopped garlic in a saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, reduce heat to medium-low, and gently boil, partially covered and stirring often, until reduced by half, about 1 hour. Season with salt to taste; set aside. Heat 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Pat dry four 1½"-thick pork rib chops; season with salt and pepper. Cook chops, turning once, until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Arrange chops on a rack over an aluminum foil-lined baking sheet. Baste chops on one side with a generous portion of tamarind sauce. Broil until sauce is bubbly and starting to caramelize, about 3 minutes. Remove from oven, flip over, and baste second side. Broil again until bubbly, about 3 minutes. Repeat basting and broiling process until all the sauce is used up and chops are caramelized and just cooked through, about 10 minutes more. Serves 4.

Imli Ki Meethi Chutney

(Tamarind Chutney with Bananas and Golden Raisins)

The word *chutney* is derived from the Hindi term *chatni*, “to lick”, referring, probably, to the fact that they’re good enough to lick up. Put 3 tbsp. golden raisins into a bowl and cover with hot water; set aside to let plump up for 1 hour, then drain. Put raisins, ½ cup tamarind extract (see box, page 62), ½ cup sugar, 1 tsp. garam masala (see page 99), ¼ tsp. ground cayenne, and ¾ tsp. salt into a nonreactive bowl and stir well. Peel and cut 1 ripe but firm banana into ¼" cubes (or, alternatively, slice it thinly) and gently fold them into the chutney (facing page, bottom right). Makes about 1 cup.



TAMARIND



Making Tamarind Extract

Outside of South and Southeast Asia, tamarind is usually sold as dense, semimoist pulp in one-pound rectangular blocks (see page 99); most is imported from Thailand, although a few brands come from India and Mexico. (Whole tamarind fruit, generally grown in Thailand or Mexico and sometimes available in markets specializing in Southeast Asian or Mexican foods, has been bred for its sweetness, not its sourness, and is usually intended to be eaten plain, not used in cooking.) When buying a block of tamarind pulp, make sure it is somewhat pliable; hard-as-rock blocks are likely to be old and stale. Once the package has been opened, seal the leftovers in plastic wrap or slip them into a plastic bag; the pulp doesn't need to be refrigerated and will keep for up to a year. To make about 1 cup of extract, measure $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of tamarind paste (a roughly $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch ball) and divide it into 8 pieces. Place the pieces in a small nonreactive bowl and add 1 cup boiling water. Let soak for 20 minutes, periodically mashing the tamarind with your fingers, freeing as much of the pulp as possible from the fiber (and, now and then, seeds). Pour the mashed mixture and its liquid into a strainer placed over an empty bowl. Firmly press down on the tamarind pulp with your fingers until nothing but seeds and fiber are left in the strainer. Discard the remaining contents of the strainer. The tamarind extract may be kept in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. (I often make larger amounts of tamarind extract than I need and freeze what I don't use in ice cube trays. For me, that's like money in the bank.) —M. J.

Philippines—and nowhere else, as far as I know—the young, green unripe tamarind, all acids and little sugar, is put to use. It soured a glorious soupy stew of shrimp (or sometimes pork or fish) called sinigang.

Those of us who live in countries where tamarind isn't grown need only look in our neighborhood Indian, Chinese, or Southeast Asian grocery, where we will find plastic-wrapped blocks of compressed tamarind pulp, most of the skin and (sometimes) the seeds removed. Pry off a hunk, soak it, strain the resulting substance, discard the seeds and fibers, and—voilà!—tamarind extract. (See box, left, for more-detailed instructions.) For those of a lazier bent, there is a newer product, tamarind concentrate, which is produced in India, comes in a plastic container, and may be spooned out like molasses. Some is sold already salted, and, unfortunately, it has a slightly dingy, burnt flavor, but it will do if only a pinch of tamarind is required. I would never use it to make my Delhi chutneys or the cooling tamarind drink called sherbet, like the one I once bought from an Arab vendor in the narrow streets of Jerusalem. These call for nothing less than the real, pure extract of that sticky, sour fruit I used to bat from the branches of my family's tree. 🌿

THE PANTRY, page 99: Sources for tamarind pods, tamarind pulp, fresh curry leaves, whole fenugreek, garam masala, and Philippine fish sauce.

RECIPE

Sinigang na Hipon

(Philippine Sour Shrimp Stew)

SERVES 4

Estela Cayco Sales, a home cook originally from Malabon, in the Philippines, gave us this recipe for sinigang, a traditional stew. Its signature aspect is its pleasing sourness, which comes from the addition of tamarind and lime juice.

- 2 cups jasmine rice
- Salt, to taste
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 small yellow onion, cut into 8 lengthwise wedges
- $\frac{1}{2}$ small daikon radish, peeled and cut crosswise into $\frac{1}{2}$ " slices
- 3 tbsp. tamarind extract (see box, left)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. heads-on medium shrimp, unpeeled
- 2 plum tomatoes, cored and cut into 4 wedges each
- 1 hot banana pepper, halved lengthwise
- Leaves from 1 head Shanghai bok choy, halved lengthwise
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh lime juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup patis (Philippine fish sauce), preferably Rufina brand (see page 99)

1. Put rice into a bowl. Cover with cold water by 2"; stir until cloudy. Let rice drain in a sieve; return to bowl. Cover again with water by 2"; stir until cloudy. Measure out 5 cups rice water; set aside. Drain rice. Put rice, $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups clean water, and salt into a medium pot; bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, until cooked through, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat; let sit, covered, for 10 minutes. Fluff rice. Cover to keep warm.

2. Heat oil in a pot over medium heat. Add onions and cook until softened, 2–3 minutes. Stir in rice water, daikon, and tamarind; bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Cook until daikon is tender, 8–10 minutes. Add shrimp, tomatoes, pepper, and bok choy and reduce heat to medium; simmer until shrimp are cooked, about 5 minutes more. Stir in lime and patis; season with salt. Serve with the rice.







Liquid Gold

ON THE FRENCH CARIBBEAN ISLAND OF MARTINIQUE,
ALL ROADS LEAD TO RUM

By Wayne Curtis Photographs by Landon Nordeman

Hot buttered rum, above. Facing page, dusting off barrels of rum inside a warehouse at Habitation Clément.

RUM



WOULD YOU like to taste an old rum?" asks Grégory Vernant, the 35-year-old grandson of one of the founders of Neisson Rhums in Martinique, patting an oak barrel as affectionately as if it were one of his own children. The two of us are standing in the warehouse where his family ages its reserve spirits. Vernant's question puts me in a bit of a quandary. It's slightly past ten in the morning, and saying, "Yes, of course!" would force me to violate an old rule of mine: Thou shalt not tipple before noon.

Vernant doesn't wait for an answer. He instructs his blender, Alex Bobbi, to pop the cork out of the barrel, in which rum has been

The town of Le Lorrain at dusk, left; bottom left, bottles of white rum from Habitation Clément. Facing page, aged Rhum Clément.



METHOD

Hot Buttered Rum

Hot buttered rum is part of an American colonial tradition in which flavorful ingredients, such as molasses, were added to soften the harsher rum available in years past. This is an adaptation of a recipe that appears in *Trader Vic's Bartender's Guide* (Doubleday, 1972). Beat $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. softened butter and 1 cup dark brown sugar in a bowl with an electric mixer until fluffy. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground cinnamon, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground cloves, and a pinch of salt and beat again to combine. Chill the buttered rum base until ready to use, up to 2 weeks. To make 1 hot buttered rum, put 2 heaping tbsp. of the buttered rum base and $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. aged rum (*rum vieux*; see facing page) into an 8-oz. mug and fill with boiling water. Stir to melt and mix; serve at once. Makes about 16 servings.

I FIND MYSELF BREAKING AN OLD RULE: THOU SHALT NOT TIPPLE BEFORE NOON



A Martinique Rum Primer

Martinique's distilleries produce the only rums on earth with their own Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée, the certification created by the French government for classifying quality agricultural products. The parameters for *rhum agricole*, as A.O.C.-certified rum is usually labeled, are steadfast: it must be made entirely from sugarcane juice, and it must emerge from the still at a relatively low proof (no higher than 72 percent alcohol), which allows the native flavors of the cane to survive the distillation. A.O.C. regulations also prohibit additives such as caramel coloring and molasses and dictate that barrels must be oak. A.O.C.-certified rum in Martinique falls into two categories: white rum (*rhum blanc*) and aged rum (*rhum vieux*). White rum isn't aged per se but instead rests in stainless-steel vats for a minimum of three months before bottling; the

distilleries Neisson, Clément, and Depaz all produce outstanding white rum, the key ingredient in ti' punch, a favorite apéritif on the island (see method, page 69). Aged rum, conversely, must be stored for three to 15 years in charred-oak barrels, which impart distinct flavors; aged rums are generally sipped neat—and slowly. Clément aged rum has a surprisingly light, citrusy taste; J.M has a hint of butterscotch; St. James's is earthy and oaky. Rums aged for more than three years are labeled with less oversight; some are, like any French aged spirits, labeled VSOP, for Very Special Old Pale, or XO, Extra Old; others, *hors d'âge* (beyond age). In these older rums, much of the sugarcane flavor will have been edged out by the complexities of the oak, which contributes hints of vanilla, some caramel, and other subtle flavors. —W.C.



RUM

METHODS

Ti' Punch

Claudine Neisson-Vernant, the daughter of one of Neisson Rhums's founders, likens the rituals surrounding ti' punch to those of a Japanese tea ceremony. Ti' punch (pronounced in the local dialect as "tea paunch") is typically served as an apéritif and is often constructed table-side by each drinker, who knows the proportions he or she prefers. Begin with a bottle of white rum, along with a little sugarcane syrup (see page 99; rough sugarcane crystals will also do) and a few limes. Thinly slice off 1 side of a lime so that you have a circle of peel with a bit of pulp attached. Squeeze the slice into a tall glass, such as a Collins glass, then drop it in. Add 2 oz. white rum (*rhum blanc*; see box, below right) and 1/2 tsp. sugarcane syrup (see page 99). Stir vigorously with a swizzle stick. If you like, add 1 or 2 ice cubes as you stir—just enough to chill the drink but not enough to dilute it too much. The remainder of the ritual is simple: sip and enjoy. Makes 1.

Martinique Milk Punch

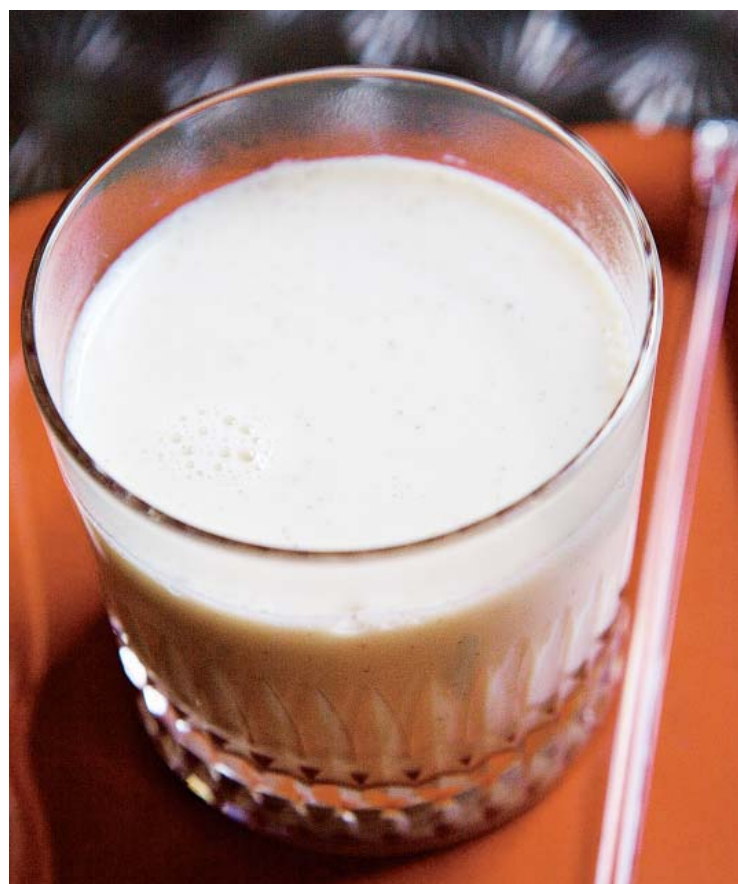
Milk punch, introduced to the British Isles by merchants from the East India Company, was fashionable in England in the early 18th century. This recipe is an adaptation of one that appears in *Esquire's Handbook for Hosts* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1949). Put 3 egg yolks into a large bowl and set aside. Pour 1 quart milk into a small pot and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Add the milk to the yolks in a slow, steady stream while whisking constantly. Add 1/4 cup sugar, 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon, 1/4 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg, 1/4 tsp. vanilla extract, and strips of zest from 1 lemon. Stir well to combine. Add 3/4 cup aged rum (*rhum vieux*; see box, right), stir well, and strain. Pour the punch into cups and serve while still hot. Serves 4.

aging since 1993, and insert a glass pipette. Having done that, Bobbi decants a couple of ounces of the maple syrup-colored liquid into a snifter. It smells of freshly cut sugarcane, with a layer of oak and hints of vanilla and cherry. I take a sip. It's supple and luxuriant, with an unexpected touch of overripe apricot. And, right then and there, I establish a new personal rule: If a distiller offers an exquisite aged rum, thou shalt drink it, whatever the time of day.

I HAVE SPENT much of the past three years researching and writing a history of rum, tracking it through the centuries of European settlement in the Americas. That research involved drinking quite a few rums, some fine, many not, but those that I sampled from Martinique, a 30-by-60-mile Caribbean island that is a part of the French Republic, invariably stood out. It was high time to pay a visit to find out why.

"On Martinique, all roads lead to rum," a taxi driver tells me a few hours after I've left Vernant's distillery. I'm destined for Habi-

WAYNE CURTIS is the author of *And a Bottle of Rum: A History of the New World in Ten Cocktails* (Crown, 2006). His writing has appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *New York Times*.



Milk punch, above. Facing page, swizzling a citrusy ti' punch in the tasting room at Depaz, one of the 11 distilleries left on Martinique.

tation Clément, the sugar plantation where Homère Clément, a physician, began operating a still in 1887. Although distillation has taken place off-site since 1989, Rhum Clément is still aged here, the barrels stashed in great pyramidal stacks in large warehouses

suffused with the scents of cane alcohol and oak. The impeccably manicured plantation is maintained in homage to rum's local heritage, as Clément was one of the early pioneers of Martinique's singular style of producing rum.

Martinique, like most of its

Finding Sugarcane-Juice Rum

Martinique's sugarcane-juice rums, most from small-batch distilleries, remain difficult to find in the United States, where most people are accustomed to cheaper, molasses-based rums. But producers of Martinique rums have been making major inroads in the past two years. Ed Hamilton, an expert on Caribbean rum, who imports the products of La Favorite and Neisson distilleries, runs www.ministryofrum.com, which has a locator to help rum fans find sources for small-batch sugarcane-juice rums. If you can't find what you're looking for there, you might try online liquor

retailers like www.binnys.com and www.samswine.com, which ship to many states (search their sites using the word *rhum*, since that will likely correspond to what's on the product label). Moët Hennessy USA also widely markets a sugarcane-juice rum called 10 Cane, which is produced in Trinidad and has an aroma and a flavor profile evocative of some Martinique rums. (The 10 Cane label does not bear the *rhum agricole* certification, which is reserved for rums made in Martinique.) Naturally, the best way to sample rums from Martinique is to visit the island itself. —W.C.

RUM

neighbors, was a major sugar producer throughout the 18th century. As elsewhere, early European settlers there discovered that molasses—a by-product of sugar making—could be fermented and distilled so that it would yield a potent liquor. The invention of rum, in essence, was pure alchemy: the conversion of industrial waste to gold.

In the 19th century, though, Martinique's rum makers took their spirit in another direction. When international competition from sugar beets depressed demand for sugarcane, planters like Clément, forced to find a new way to make cane cultivation pay, adapted, figuring out how to produce rum directly from sugarcane juice. In the process they made a felici-

tous discovery: the distillate of pure juice can emerge from the still at a lower proof than that of a molasses-based distillate, which generally must have a higher alcohol content in order to prevent the carryover of the undesirable, sulfurous tastes naturally found in molasses. A distillate of a lower proof allows more of the pleasing flavors of sugarcane to survive.

Capitalizing on this new method of rum production, 150 distilleries flourished on Martinique in the 19th century. Today, 11 remain, only eight of them actively producing. One can feel rum's ghostly history almost everywhere on the island. As I am walking through the lovely Anse Latouche gardens in Le Carbet after leaving the pris-

METHOD

David Wondrich's Rum Punch

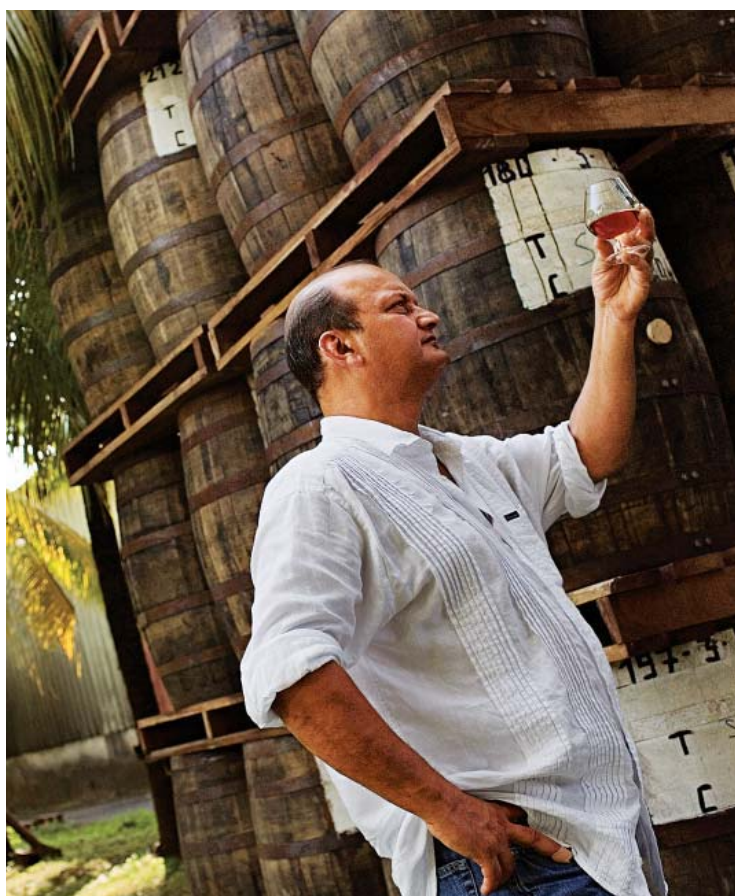
The alcoholic fruit drink we know as punch is an Indian invention that was adopted in the 1600s by British sailors, who later introduced it to the Caribbean islands, where it flourished. Fill a medium freezerproof bowl with water; freeze. Make 2 cups of strong black tea using 2 tea bags and 2 cups water. While tea is still hot, add 1/2 cup demerara sugar; stir until dissolved; refrigerate to let cool. Once the tea mixture is cool, add 1/2 cup fresh lime juice and 2 cups aged rum (*rhum vieux*; see box, page 69). Stir well; refrigerate until ready to use. About 30 minutes before serving, loosen ice from bowl and transfer to a punch bowl. Pour punch over ice and top with a generous grating of nutmeg. Serves 10.

tine grounds of Clément, I come upon an ancient distillery, its walls crumbling, its equipment rusted.

THE NEXT DAY I head up the Atlantic coast toward the Mont Pelée volcano, Martinique's

highest peak. On the lower reaches of the mountain's rumpled, emerald green northeastern slope sits the red-roofed Rhumerie de Fonds Préville, looking like an ancient lost city. There I meet cellar master Nazaire Canataous,

Rum punch, below left, became popular in the Caribbean thanks to British sailors. Below right, distiller Michel Fayad at the St. James Distillery.



THE INVENTION OF RUM WAS PURE ALCHEMY: THE
CONVERSION OF SUGARCANE JUICE INTO GOLD

RUM

who has been distilling Rhum J.M, as that rum maker's product is called, for more than 20 years. Standing with him in the distillery, I learn that during the April-to-May production season, cutters at Fonds Préville harvest some 60 to 70 tons of sugarcane each day to feed the still. Juice from the pulped cane ferments in stainless-steel tanks, where it ages for three months. About 60 percent of the distillate is bottled as *rhum blanc* (white rum) and the remainder as *rhum vieux* (aged rum), which is generally drunk neat (see box, page 67).

Canataous offers me a sip of a J.M rum. It, too, is a remarkable spirit, at once silky and intricately flavored, and it sends a gentle warmth cascading down my spine.

PRODUCTION, THOUGH, is only part of the mystique of Martinique rums. Eager to educate myself more in the art of their consumption, I make my way that evening to Cap Est, a small, elegant resort. Sitting in Le Cohi-bar, the establishment's minimalist lounge, I'm joined by Gilles Trouillot, the restaurant manager and de facto rum sommelier, whose white shirt, neat khakis, and wire-rim glasses give him a professorial air. Trouillot is one of the island's foremost experts on rum, and over dinner we talk about how it's drunk.

While islanders do occasionally enjoy a predinner ti' punch (see method, page 69), Martinique doesn't have much of a cocktail culture; it's not a piña colada—with-little parasols kind of place. Aged rums are often enjoyed after dinner, and Cap Est offers about a hundred different rums by the glass. Trouillot leads me to the resort's "cellar" and proudly shows me some of the more notable bottles in Cap Est's collection. Here's a La Favorite aged for 33 years in oak and, over there, a quartet of old

Cléments, including rare bottles from 1950 and 1966. Trouillot scrambles up a ladder and retrieves St. James rums from 1939 and 1941. He reminds me that rum, like all spirits, is inert when bottled and doesn't continue to age as wine does. What you taste is the unaltered product of the distiller's art as practiced in the year the rum was bottled.

Back at the table, Trouillot proffers a rum of more recent vintage: a La Mauny *hors d'âge*, "beyond age" (a name given to certain rums aged more than three years), produced in 1995



and mellowed for ten years in the barrel. He explains that the rums produced in the south of the island, where the terrain is flatter, come from cane that gets more sun and thus yields a fruitier and sweeter liquor. Perhaps it's the alcohol, perhaps it's the power of suggestion, or perhaps it's because I'm swaddled so comfortably in the tropical night air, but I swear I can taste sugarcane fields and sweet island breezes at the first sip.

I ask Trouillot why he chose to open this particular bottle for me. He smiles. "Because," he says, "it tastes like the sun in a glass."

THE PANTRY, page 99: A source for sugarcane syrup.

THE GUIDE

MARTINIQUE

COUNTRY CODE: 596 EXCHANGE RATE: 0.80 euro = \$1.00

Dinner with drinks, tax, and tip:

EXPENSIVE Over \$60 MODERATE \$40–\$60 INEXPENSIVE Under \$40

WHAT TO DO

Eight of the 11 rum distilleries on Martinique are actively producing. All welcome visitors and are a short drive from Fort-de-France, the country's picturesque capital.

DISTILLERIE NEISSON *Le Carbet* (596 78 03 70; www.neisson.com). A gift shop sells rum and offers samples for tasting, and guests are free to walk around the production plant, which operates in full swing during the harvest season, from midwinter to early spring.

HABITATION CLÉMENT *Le François* (596 54 62 07; www.rhum-clement.com). This 18th-century plantation no longer distills rum on its premises, but it does offer walking tours of its manicured grounds and has a museum in the old distillery and plantation house.

RHUMERIE DE FONDS-PRÉVILLE *Macouba* (596 78 53 40; www.rhum-jm.com). Surrounded by cane fields beneath the Mont Pelée volcano, this distillery retains the rough-edged look of a working factory where little has changed in generations.

WHERE TO STAY

CAP EST LAGOON RESORT & SPA *Le François* (596 54 80 80; www.capest.com). Rates: \$505–\$1,263, double. This stunning hotel has 50 suites in 18 colonial-style buildings, two restaurants, and an open-air bar. The selection of vintage rums at Le Cohi-bar is by far

the island's best. Also outstanding is the resort's restaurant, Le Bélem (*expensive*). Specialties include foie gras with banana, Caribbean bass with rosemary, and poached mirlions (chayote).

HOTEL DIAMANT-LES-BAINS *Le Diamant* (596 76 40 14). Rates: \$88–\$138, double. Set on a series of terraces overlooking the ocean about a half hour from Fort-de-France, this hotel has a main lodge, small bungalows near a relaxing stretch of beach, and a fine restaurant.

WHERE TO EAT

LE BRÉDAS *Saint Joseph* (596 57 65 52). *Moderate*. Le Brédas is one of the few chef-owned restaurants on Martinique. Island native Jean-Charles Brédas offers an innovative menu of unexpected combinations, such as pork terrine with green bananas and pumpkin or duck in guava with green pepper sauce.

CHEZ LES PÊCHEURS *Le Carbet* (596 28 84 89). *Inexpensive*. Come early and stay late at this beachside restaurant with live music and big crowds. Start with a ti' punch; then move on to a platter of rice and beans and fresh fish in pepper sauce.

LAPLANTATION *La Mentin* (596 50 16 08). *Expensive*. This smart restaurant, hidden down a narrow lane, serves classic French cuisine influenced by African and Indian flavors. Dine on the marble veranda surrounded by lush plants and the sounds of the tropical night.





CHRISTMAS AT CURRANDOOLEY

A fifth-generation Australian ranching clan returns to the family seat for a holiday feast beneath the blazing December sun

BY CHLOE OSBORNE PHOTOGRAPHS BY LANDON NORDEMAN

Cattle at Currandooley station, below. Facing page, from top, in Michael and Cassie Osborne's homestead; Sally Osborne checks the ham.



AUSTRALIA

Five miles northeast of the small Australian town of Bungendore, in New South Wales, at the turnoff for a dusty private road, stands a hand-painted sign that reads CURRANDOOLEY. Following that road, you'll pass my father's cattle and sheep station and the house I grew up in (my brother,

Dominic, and his family live there now), as well as the house where my parents, Michael and Cassie, currently live. Farther on, a tributary dirt road leads to my cousin Harry's house, a shearing shed, and several cottages. Finally, four miles in from the main road you'll arrive at my uncle Pat's station: Currandooley.

My father's family, the Osbornes, is one of the oldest farming clans in Australia. Currandooley was 29,000 acres when my paternal great-great-grandfather, Pat, bought it in the mid-1800s. Four generations of dividing those acres between sons and sons of sons has yielded a sprawling family compound, with brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and cousins in every direction. It was a wonderful way to grow up; home reached as far as the horizon, or so I thought, and we children constantly roamed the adjoining lands on foot, horseback, and motorbikes. It also made for an awfully large gathering on Christmas Day.

Christmas comes in the middle of the Australian summer, which in our patch of the country is dry, full of flies, and bloody hot. Nonetheless, on the 25th we always sit down to the most British of Christmas meals: roast turkey with stuffing, glazed ham, and steamed plum pudding with custard sauce. Many Australians have abandoned that hefty past for a lighter, often seafood-oriented one, but for my family of Anglophiles, that just wouldn't feel right. The familiar flavors of sage, cranberry, nutmeg, clove, and brandy and the rituals of standing over a large bird, sharpening the carving knife, and carrying a flaming plum pudding to the table—all these things are embedded in my notion of a Christmas celebration.

For as long as I can remember, the responsibility of hosting Christmas has rotated among five branches of the family. Now that a handful of us have left Bungendore and our family has swelled to 52, it's impossible for everyone to attend every year. Living in New York, I've been absent many times, but last year I was determined to make it. The festivities were to be held at Currandooley, the family seat, so to speak, and 38 of us—including my cousin Rachel and her family from England, who rarely manage to make it on the same years I do—planned to be there.

WE OSBORNES ARE descendants of one Henry Osborne, a Protestant Irishman who immigrated to Australia in 1829, four decades after the first

British settled here. Henry brought Irish linen, cloth, and blankets to local settlers and, after selling his wares, flourished as a grazier, or squatter, as gentleman farmers used to be called. In 1840 he made his name and fortune by driving the largest herd of livestock then on record in the country across 1,000 unmapped miles from Dapto, outside Sydney, to Adelaide.

Henry's second son, Pat, purchased Currandooley in 1866. After the original homestead flooded in 1873, Pat rebuilt on higher ground using gneiss quarried on the property, Australian cedar, and tiles from Marseille. He fashioned the house after a French château and constructed a veranda, now covered in vines, spacious rooms, deep wooden window frames, and a pigeon tower across a gravel courtyard.

The Osbornes were a distinguished family in their day. Back then in rural Australia, stations like Currandooley were the center of country life. At its peak, from the 1920s to the 1950s, it employed about 30 people, including maids, a cook, a gardener, a blacksmith, and stockmen, most living in cottages on the station. Currandooley had its own telephone system and fielded a cricket team that competed against teams from other stations. The celebrated Australian opera singer Dame Nellie Melba even stayed at the homestead in 1927, when she performed at the Old Parliament House in the nation's new capital, Canberra, 25 miles southwest of Bungendore.

But the days of grandeur for gentlemen farmers across Australia largely ended in the 1960s, when "primary producer" became a considerably less profitable link in the food chain. "Shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in three generations", as my father likes to describe our family. Not that he and his brothers—each of whom inherited his land when their father died,

METHOD

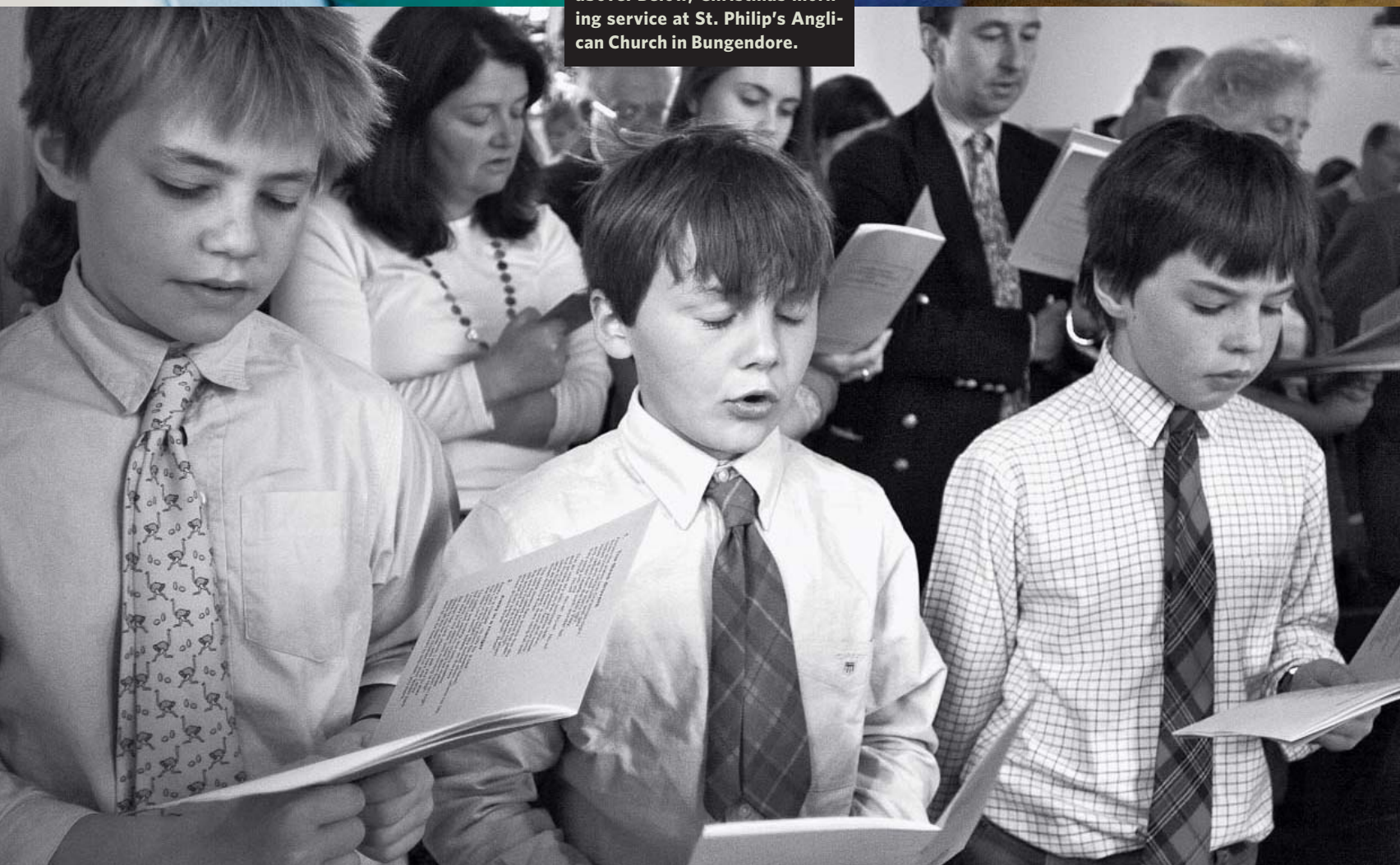
Christmas Ham

Sally Osborne often bakes her ham a day ahead and serves it at room temperature. For more information on ham, see page 93. Place a 14-16-lb. bone-in, skin-on smoked ham on a platter and let it sit at room temperature for 1 hour. Preheat oven to 425°. Peel off and discard the skin, leaving the fat on the ham. Using a sharp knife, score fat on top side of ham in a crisscross pattern, creating diamonds about 2" long, then stud each diamond with 2-3 whole cloves. Rub the top of the ham evenly with a mixture of 1/2 cup light brown sugar and the finely grated zest of 2 lemons. Transfer ham to a shallow roasting pan and bake for 20 minutes. Reduce heat to 350° and continue baking until ham is deep golden brown and a knife inserted into the thickest part comes out hot, about 45 minutes more. Serve with crab apple jelly, if you like. Serves 16-18.

CHLOE OSBORNE is a writer and food consultant who lives in New York. Her last article for SAVEUR was "Lamingtons, Beestings, and Meat Pies" (March 2005).



Sally Osborne's Christmas ham, above. Below, Christmas morning service at St. Philip's Anglican Church in Bungendore.





Pat Osborne, above. Below, from left, Lucy Mora, Harry Osborne, Catherine Ritchie, Willie Mora, and Jim Osborne. Facing page, crab apple jelly.



AUSTRALIA

in 1965—mind too much; notoriously stubborn and resourceful men in their late 70s, they came of age during the lean years of World War II. Today Currandooley, as well as Lakelands and Ellendon (my father's and my uncle's stations, respectively), only occasionally employ outside labor, but all are fully operational.

THE 25TH BEGINS with the morning service at St. Philip's Anglican Church in Bungendore, after which I head to Currandooley. Since arriving home a few days ago, I've been catching up with small groups of relatives, but I'm excited about the big gathering later today. Some of the children are already in the pool or playing cricket, and I'm tempted to join them, but instead I head to the kitchen to help my uncle Pat's wife, Sally, and two of their four children, Catherine and Jim, get a head start on dinner.

Aunt Sally is the quintessential country cook. She eschews elaborate

preparations, taking pride instead in a perfectly cooked roast of home-grown beef or lamb served with garden vegetables, and her larder is stocked with her own canned fruits and jams, as well as shortbread, meringues, or some cakes in case unexpected visitors arrive. "People attract people," she says. "Five doesn't turn into ten, but ten will turn into 20, and my mother taught me that if you want them to stay you have to feed them."

As she moves around her kitchen, it is obvious that Sally is used to cooking for a crowd. For our group, she is preparing two turkeys, two hams, several salads, and boiled potatoes, among other dishes, but she appears neither rushed nor anxious. Stuffing the plump birds with a loose mixture of bread crumbs, celery, sautéed onion, herbs, and chopped almonds, Sally tells us about when she used to breed her own turkeys. "They were noisy, messy animals," she concedes. "I had to get rid of them in the end."

Next she slathers the turkeys' breasts with butter and—to my surprise—lays ripped-open brown paper bags on top of the birds. She tells me that it's an "old lady's trick" for keeping the meat moist. I thought I had heard about every moist-turkey-breast trick there was. "At what age were you going to tell me?" I ask.

"When you were old enough to host Christmas," she replies with a smile, popping the birds into the oven. As Catherine makes a cucumber and tomato salad, Jim assembles a tart, garlicky dressing for a mixed green salad. Meanwhile, Sally gathers the ingredients for an English bread sauce. Consisting of white bread, milk, onion, cloves, allspice, and bay leaves, it traditionally accompanies roast turkey, chicken, or pheasant.

Outside the kitchen window, Uncle Pat can be seen raking the lawn. Although he doesn't let on, we know he's worried about the threat of a bush

RECIPE

Crab Apple Jelly

MAKES ABOUT 3 PINTS

When making her version of this jelly, Sally Osborne strains the apples through a clean pillowcase tied onto a broomstick, which she suspends between two chairs. The juice collects in a bowl underneath.

- 4 lbs. crab apples, stemmed and quartered**
- Sugar, as needed**
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice**
- 2 1"-wide strips lemon zest**

1. Put apples and 6 cups water into a large heavy pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, until apples are broken down and pulpy, about 25 minutes. Set 6–8 layers of cheesecloth over a medium bowl, allowing cheesecloth to hang generously over sides. Transfer apples with their juice to center of cheesecloth and draw up sides to form a "purse". Cinch closed with kitchen twine, then tie to a long wooden spoon or dowel. Set the bowl inside a large stockpot. Rest wooden spoon across top of stockpot, letting purse hang freely inside. Strain through a fine sieve any juice that immediately collects in the bowl and transfer juice to a large measuring cup; cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate. Allow apples to continue to strain overnight.

2. Put a large plate into freezer to let chill. Discard apple purse. Strain accumulated juice through a fine sieve into the same measuring cup with the refrigerated juice. You should end up with about 6 cups of juice. For every 2 cups of juice, measure 1 lb. of sugar (about 2½ cups). Combine strained juice, sugar, lemon juice, and lemon zest in the large pot and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally, over medium-high heat. Boil vigorously, skimming off and discarding any foam that rises to the surface, 18–20 minutes. Test jelly by running a finger through a spoonful of it set on the chilled plate. If the line stays clear—that is, the jelly doesn't ooze back into place—it's ready. Discard zest.

3. Remove jelly from heat and pour into sterilized canning jars. Secure jars with lids and ring bands. Transfer filled jars to a canning rack, submerge in a pot of gently boiling water (jars should be covered by at least 1" of water), and boil for 15 minutes. Carefully lift the jars from water with jar tongs and place on a dish towel to let cool for 24 hours. To test that the jars have sealed properly, press on center of each lid and remove your finger. If lid stays down, it's sealed. Refrigerate any jelly that hasn't sealed and use within 4 weeks. (Sealed jelly will keep indefinitely.) Serve with ham, if you like.



A U S T R A L I A

fire, an Australian farmer's worst nightmare. During the summer, the grass is yellow and dry, and when the hot winds blow, the conditions are ideal. Four years ago, some of my cousins turned up at Christmas dinner covered in soot. They had been fighting a fire that had been encroaching on the land surrounding their property all morning. They had barely finished eating when a call came that the fire had flared up again, and off they went.

By early evening, all 38 of us are mingling in the walled garden. Pat, Brian, and Dad naturally gravitate toward one another, but not much gets said. The brothers stare at the ground and exchange lines like "Good weather for a bush fire" and "Since the drought broke, the bloody grasshoppers are back". Australia is a tough country to farm, and pessimism is as necessary a tool for a farmer here as any he may have in his shed.

After taking the family pictures, a carving frenzy ensues: Pat slices the turkeys, and his son-in-law George Vestey the hams. It looks like a race. Others pitch in to toss just-drained potatoes with parsley, chives, and tarragon (which Sally grows in an old laundry tub outside the pantry window), pour gravy, and carry platters to the dining room, festively decorated with ribbons and eucalyptus garlands by Catherine, Rachel, me, and my sister, Lucy. In the middle of each of the tables are piles of Christmas "crackers", which, when tugged apart, release a bang and a shower of tiny trinkets. Before the meal even begins, the tables are a celebratory mess.

The arrival of the food quiets the crowd. The turkey, now free of its brown paper veil, is indeed outstandingly moist, and the ham's thin crust has just



Above, Pat and Sally Osborne, at left, with the author and their son-in-law George Vestey. Facing page, Christmas pudding with custard sauce.

R E C I P E

Christmas Pudding with Custard Sauce

SERVES 12

Sally Osborne ages her Christmas pudding for up to a year. This recipe, an adaptation of one in *The Constance Spry Cookery Book* (J. M. Dent and Sons, 1956), is much quicker but yields equally good results.

FOR THE PUDDING:

- 1 tbsp. butter
- 3 1/2 cups fresh white bread crumbs
- 2 cups dried currants
- 1 3/4 cups seedless golden raisins
- 1 3/4 cups seedless raisins
- 1 1/2 cups light brown sugar
- 1 cup self-rising flour
- 1/3 lb. cold beef suet, membranes removed, grated
- 2/3 cup stout, such as Guinness
- 1/4 cup finely chopped candied lemon peel
- 1/4 cup finely chopped candied orange peel
- 1/4 cup slivered almonds
- 1 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp. ground allspice
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 granny smith apple, stemmed, cored, peeled, and coarsely grated
- Juice and finely grated zest of a small orange

FOR THE CUSTARD:

- 4 cups milk
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 8 egg yolks
- 1/4 tbsp. flour
- 1 vanilla bean, halved lengthwise

- 1/2 cup brandy, optional

1. For the pudding: Grease a 10-cup pudding basin (see page 99) or a heatproof ceramic bowl with butter; set aside. Put bread crumbs, currants, raisins, sugar, flour, suet, stout, peels, almonds, nutmeg, allspice, salt, eggs, apple, and orange juice and zest into a large bowl; mix well. Transfer mixture to basin; pat down to remove any air pockets. Cover basin with 2 layers of waxed paper and 2 layers of foil; tie tightly with twine.

2. Put basin on a rack in a wide deep pot. Add enough water that it reaches two-thirds of the way up the sides of the basin. Cover; bring to a simmer over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low to maintain a simmer; steam for 8 hours (replenish water as necessary). Carefully remove basin; let cool slightly, about 10 minutes. Remove twine, foil, and paper. Run a knife around edge of pudding to loosen it; turn it out onto a serving platter.

3. For the custard: Whisk together milk and sugar in a small pot; bring just to a boil over medium-high heat. Whisk yolks in a medium heatproof bowl until frothy. While whisking constantly, gradually pour in hot milk mixture; whisk in flour and vanilla. Pour water into a medium pot to a depth of 2"; bring to a simmer over medium-low heat. Place bowl of egg-milk mixture over simmering water; cook, stirring constantly, until it resembles a thin pudding, about 35 minutes. Strain custard through a fine sieve into a pitcher or bowl.

4. To serve: Warm brandy in a pot; carefully light brandy with a match and pour over pudding. When flames die out, serve with custard (4 tbsp. per serving).





Sally and Jim Osborne exchange gifts, above. Below, decorations for the tree. Facing page, Curran-dooley dressing.





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AUSTRALIA

the right amount of citrus zest and clove. The creamy bread sauce and a tart-sweet crab apple jelly are the perfect condiments for each, respectively. As I help myself to seconds, Pat rises, eliciting loud protests. We all know what's coming. "I would like you to raise your glasses....," he begins.

"No!" someone calls out.

Undaunted, Pat finishes the toast with "to the queen". Britain's Queen Elizabeth is also Australia's, which doesn't sit well with some people. Those in the dining room who stand and those who are seated can basically be classified by age. Pat stares down the younger folk, and one by one we get to our feet, more out of respect for him than out of allegiance to the crown.

Suddenly, Catherine's husband, David Ritchie, jumps to his feet and bravely counters, "To the republic!" Cheers and jeers sound, and the yelling that ensues evokes the British House of Commons. The young children look on in wary amazement until the hollering collapses into laughter.

Pat eventually takes the floor again to give our other annual toast: "To absent friends," he says. This year my brother Dominic's family is with his in-laws, and another entire branch of relatives is in Sydney with my cousin Jenya, who is battling cancer. I have missed more Christmases than most, and Pat's sentiment warms me.

SALLY AND PAT SLIP INTO THE kitchen to ready the meal's finale, the Christmas pudding. Also known as plum pudding, it is actually a cake made with flour, brown sugar, dried fruits, spices, bread crumbs, suet (beef or mutton fat), and stout. The ingredients are steamed in a deep, muslin-covered bowl for eight hours and then "fed" a trickle of brandy every few months for up to a year. Before being served, it is steamed for another three hours, turned out onto a plate, and doused with flaming brandy. The result is a rich, heavily spiced, drunken concoction enjoyed the most enthusiastically, I've concluded, by subjects of the British Commonwealth.

While we wait for the pudding to be turned out, David, the winery manager for Delatite Winery, his family's vineyard in Mansfield, Victoria, pours his crisp 2002 Demelza sparkling wine. We're already a bit heady from his fruity 1994 Devil's River, a cabernet sauvignon-merlot blend, and his spicy 1996 Dead Man's Hill gewürztraminer; his wines have won many awards but are appreciated by no one more than my wine-guzzling family.

Hearing a loud groan coming from outside, we look up: ten-year-old



METHOD

Currandooley Dressing

(Meyer Lemon and Garlic Dressing)

When Jim Osborne makes this dressing, he uses the juice from the meyer lemons grown at Currandooley. We tried the recipe with juice from regular lemons, and the results were just as delicious, if a bit more tart. Toss the dressing with any combination of mixed greens. Using a fork, crush 3 cloves garlic and 1 tbsp. coarse salt together in a small bowl until mixture is soft and moist, interspersed with large chunks of garlic. Gradually drizzle in 1/2 cup mild extra-virgin olive oil while mixing vigorously with a fork. Add a generous sprinkling of black pepper and continue to mix. Whisk in 1/2 cup meyer lemon juice to make a smooth dressing. Strain dressing through a fine sieve, discard solids, and adjust the seasonings. Store in the refrigerator for up to 7 days. Makes about 1 cup.

Edmund, Rachel's son, is tuning his bagpipes. He enters the room, eyes focused and cheeks puffed, along with that unmistakable bagpipe squeal and rasp of high and low notes. Behind him, Pat carries the plum pudding, enveloped in blue flames. By the time Edmund finishes "Scotland the Brave", Lucy, Rachel, and I are in tears.

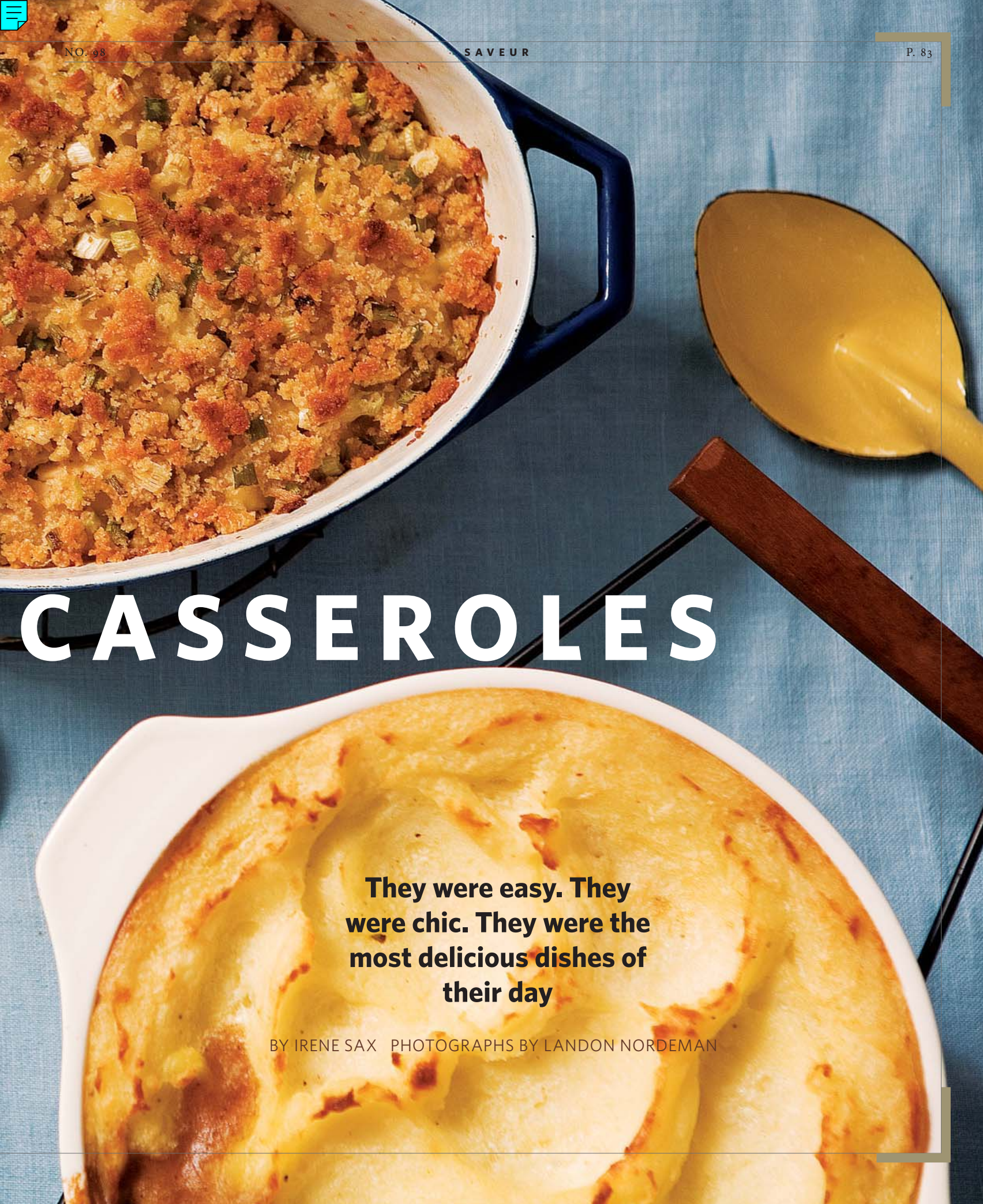
After dessert, Sally relaxes in her chair. We have eaten magnificently, laughed, and drunk more than our fill. I may not be able to make it back to Currandooley for years. I glance at the large portrait hanging above the fireplace; my great-great-grandfather Pat—standing ramrod straight, wearing a thick mustache—presides over us, and he looks proud. ✍

THE PANTRY, page 99: Sources for crab apples and a pudding basin.





THE AGE OF



CASSEROLES

**They were easy. They
were chic. They were the
most delicious dishes of
their day**

BY IRENE SAX PHOTOGRAPHS BY LANDON NORDEMAN

CASSEROLES

RECIPE

Shepherd's Pie

SERVES 6

Shepherd's pie (right) gets its name from the romantic notion that it was eaten by shepherds in the north of England long ago. We decided to make ours with lamb, keeping the spirit of the idea. When made with beef, this classic casserole is usually called cottage pie in England.

- 14 **tbsp. butter**
- 2 **lbs. lamb shoulder, trimmed and cut into 1/2" cubes**
- 2 **leeks, white parts only, finely chopped**
- 2 **medium carrots, chopped**
- 2 **tbsp. flour**
- 1 1/2 **cups beef stock**
- 1 **tbsp. worcestershire sauce (see page 94)**
- 1 **tbsp. finely chopped rosemary leaves**
- 1 **tbsp. finely chopped thyme leaves**
- 1/8 **tsp. freshly grated nutmeg**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 1/2 **cups frozen peas, thawed**
- 3 **large russet potatoes (about 2 lbs.), peeled and quartered**
- 1/2 **cup half-and-half**

1. Melt 2 tbsp. butter in a large pot over high heat. Add one-third of the lamb and brown on all sides, 4–5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer lamb to a plate, leaving fat in pot. Repeat process 2 more times, using 2 tbsp. butter and one-third of the lamb for each batch. Add leeks and carrots to pot, reduce heat to medium, and cook until softened, scraping up any browned bits, 3–4 minutes. Return lamb and its juices to pot along with flour and cook, stirring frequently, for 1 minute. Whisk in stock, worcestershire, rosemary, thyme, nutmeg, and salt and pepper to taste. Increase heat to medium-high; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, until lamb is tender, about 40 minutes. Uncover pot and simmer, stirring often, until thickened, 35–40 minutes more. Remove from heat, stir in peas, and set aside.

2. Meanwhile, put potatoes into a large pot and cover with salted water; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until tender, 20–25 minutes. Drain and transfer potatoes to a bowl. Add 6 tbsp. butter, half-and-half, and salt and pepper to taste; mash smooth with a potato masher.

3. Preheat oven to 375°. Transfer lamb mixture to a 2-quart casserole dish. Top evenly with mashed potatoes, making swirls and whorls with the back of a spoon. Cut remaining butter into small cubes; scatter over potatoes. Bake until golden brown and bubbling, about 30 minutes.



IT MUST BE YEARS—no, decades—since I last made a casserole: I mean an all-American one-pot meal of ground beef, elbow macaroni, and canned tomatoes or of tuna, noodles, and a white sauce. But there was a time, back in the 1950s, when casseroles were standard fare in my kitchen. I made them not only for family suppers but also on the occasions when, after much polishing of wedding present silver, ironing of napkins, and brooding about hors d'oeuvres, I put together a grown-up dinner party.

In those days I lived with my husband and three small children in Rochester, New York, where snow fell from November through April. We had four rooms in university housing and, unable to afford restaurants or babysitters, swapped dinner party invitations with other couples just like us. But don't imagine

that these were slapdash affairs. We read the magazines; we knew how things were supposed to be done.

In the winter, the sun set at around four in the afternoon and the kids went to bed at six. That left me an hour to dash around, scooping up toys from the living-room floor and giving the bathroom a quick, pine-scented once-over. I'd shove my jeans into the hamper, dive into the loose Guatemalan dress I used as a hostess gown, and then stick the shepherd's pie that I'd prepared earlier that day into the oven. By the time the guests arrived, at seven (often with a sleeping infant they'd lay in the center of our bed), there were candles on the pullout table and ice in the ice bucket.

I can't believe how much we could drink in those days: not just martinis and manhattans but strange concoctions that we got from cocktail books and from my splattered copy

IRENE SAX is the former food editor of *Newsday*. This is her first article for *SAVEUR*.

CASSEROLES



of *The Joy of Cooking*. We'd sip our rob roys and sidecars, smoke our Pall Malls, and eat deviled eggs while the women talked about their children and the men about their jobs.

When I finally carried the shepherd's pie to the table, all steamy and crusty, and served it with garlic bread, a green salad, and glasses of Gallo white, I knew that we were living the good life. That's because, back then, casseroles,

traditionally used for making food go farther in hard times, were actually considered chic.

TODAY, OF COURSE, casseroles are hopelessly out of style, done in by a combination of prosperity and the availability of ever more convenient supermarket foods. But while they've become dated, they are by no means dead. Despite ups and downs in

RECIPE

Tuna-Noodle Casserole

SERVES 6

This stalwart of American cooking (left) is often topped with a crunchy layer of crushed potato chips instead of bread crumbs and traditionally made with a can or two of cream of mushroom soup. Our "from scratch" version is respectfully updated.

- 10 **tblsp. butter**
- Salt**
- 4 1/2 **cups (about 10 oz.) flat egg noodles**
- 5 **scallions, chopped**
- 3 **tblsp. flour**
- 1 1/2 **tsp. dry mustard**
- 3 1/3 **cups milk**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 **12-oz. can tuna packed in oil, drained and broken into small chunks**
- 1 1/2 **cups homemade fresh white bread crumbs**

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Rub the inside of a 2 1/2-quart casserole dish with 1 tblsp. butter. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add noodles and cook until al dente, 5–7 minutes. Drain and transfer noodles to a large bowl.

2. Melt 4 tblsp. butter in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add half the scallions and cook until softened, 1–2 minutes. Add flour and mustard and cook, stirring frequently, for 1 minute. Gradually pour in milk, whisking constantly, and bring to a boil. Cook sauce, stirring frequently, until smooth and thickened, 16–18 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer sauce to the bowl with the noodles. Add tuna and stir gently to combine. Transfer tuna-noodle mixture to prepared dish.

3. Melt remaining butter and toss with remaining scallions, bread crumbs, and salt and pepper to taste in a bowl. Scatter seasoned bread crumbs over tuna-noodle mixture and bake until golden brown and bubbling, 20–25 minutes. Let casserole cool slightly before serving.

A MODERN CONVENIENCE

The Campbell Soup Company started promoting the use of condensed soup in place of sauces in 1916, but it wasn't until the invention of its cream of mushroom soup, in 1934, that the concept really started to take root in the American culinary imagination. A popular company pamphlet from the 1960s, "Easy Ways to Delicious Meals", gives a template for casseroles that lists a can of any cream soup, half a cup of milk, one to one and a half cups of cooked or canned meat, fish, or poultry, two cups of cooked noodles, half a cup of cooked beans or green peas, and a

topping of two tablespoons of bread crumbs, stuffing, or cornflakes (but, curiously, not that other popular topping: crushed potato chips).



It was to bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees. In *My Mother's Southern Kitchen*, author James Villas confesses that he tried to substitute a homemade cream sauce for the requisite canned soup in a broccoli casserole, one of his mother's favorite recipes; the experiment was a failure. A proper sauce, he wrote, just didn't yield the same, succulent results. —I.S.

CASSEROLES

RECIPE

Tamale Pie

SERVES 6

We adore this homey American classic (right), a Superbowl party favorite.

- 4 **tblsp. butter**
- Salt**
- 2¹/₄ **cups coarse cornmeal**
- 2 **tblsp. bacon drippings or vegetable oil**
- 1 **medium yellow onion, chopped**
- 1 **small green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and chopped**
- 1 **clove garlic, finely chopped**
- 1¹/₄ **lbs. lean ground beef**
- 1 **tblsp. chili powder**
- 1/2 **tsp. ground cumin**
- 1 **cup canned crushed tomatoes**

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Rub a 2¹/₂-quart casserole dish with 1 tblsp. butter; set aside. Put 1 quart water and 2 tsp. salt into a medium pot; bring to a boil. Gradually add cornmeal while whisking vigorously. Reduce heat to low and cook, stirring often, until thick, 8-10 minutes. Add remaining butter and stir until combined. Spoon half the cornmeal mixture into the prepared dish. Spread out with the back of a wet spoon to cover the bottom and sides completely; set aside. Cover remaining cornmeal mixture to keep warm and set aside.

2. Heat drippings in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onions, peppers, and garlic and cook, stirring often, until softened, 7-8 minutes. Increase heat to medium-high; add beef, chili powder, and cumin; cook until meat is no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and salt to taste and cook until most of the liquid has evaporated, 6-8 minutes.

3. Spoon filling into casserole, then top with remaining cornmeal mixture, spreading it out with the back of a wet spoon to cover the filling. Bake until top is crisp and sides are bubbling, 30-35 minutes.



prestige, casseroles have always enjoyed a solid grassroots popularity.

For one thing, they can be delicious. Omit the garlic salt and Durkee fried onions that blighted your grandmother's hot chicken salad, and you may be surprised at how good it tastes. For another, virtually anyone can make them. Recipes for casseroles tend to be easy and forgiving; everything goes into the dish and the dish goes into the oven, where it may stay for anywhere from minutes to hours.

Perhaps best of all, casseroles are truly and traditionally American. Look in any local charity cookbook, and amid recipes for today's tomato-and-basil salads you'll find casseroles or, depending on the region, "hot dishes". Many of these recipes

are forever attached to the home cooks who invented them: it's not just any old noodle surprise casserole; it's Aunt Millie's noodle surprise casserole. In older books, Aunt Millie was often the family's live-in cook. In the oldest books she might have been an ex-slave. Casseroles are who we are, or at least who we used to be.

The name casserole, like much of our culinary heritage, is European, taken from the heavy, covered French pots of the same name. The word itself probably comes from the archaic French term *casse* (pan), and the dish is related to ones like cassoulet. (For more on casserole dishes themselves, see box, below.) In this country, by the end of the 19th century, the old-world stews and braises that are the American casserole's forebears began to evolve into one-pot mixtures of protein, starch, sauce, and, often, vegetables. James Villas, author of *Crazy for Casseroles* and one of the few contemporary food writers who admit to loving them (he calls them "the true cooking of America"), says they've been popular in the South since Reconstruction, when women were suddenly faced with the challenge of feeding their households with limited supplies of food and no kitchen help.

RECIPES FOR DISHES called casseroles started to become common in American cookbooks during the First World War. But it wasn't until the Depression and, soon afterward, the food shortages of the Second World War that casseroles turned into the objects of a national enthusiasm. Marian and Nino Tracy's *Casserole Cookery*, for instance, an iconic book published in 1941, went through 13 printings in the next ten years. (See box, page 88, for more about casserole cookbooks.)

The main impetus behind the popularity

AMERICA'S OWN COOKWARE



There's something uniquely satisfying about cooking and serving food in the same vessel. Maybe that explains the sentimental attachment so many Americans have to their old casserole dishes—or maybe it's simply the fact that they just look great. The American casserole dish as we know it was born in 1916, when the Corning Glass Works, in upstate New York, developed a material called Pyrex, a borosilicate glass designed to withstand high temperatures. During World War II, glass ovenware surged in popularity as the production of metal pans was curtailed to aid the war effort. Anchor Hocking, in Lancaster, Ohio, was one of the manufacturers that rose to meet the demand; its Fire-King line became known for its vivid, distinctive colors, such as sapphire blue and Jade-ite. After the war, Corning reclaimed the cutting edge with another new material: Pyroceram, a composite substance that had previously been used to make nose cones for guided missiles; Corning began selling it in 1958 under the name Corning Ware. Emblazoned with their signature blue cornflowers, Corning Ware casserole dishes became veritable icons of the Atomic Age; their shapes and the patterns decorating their surfaces evolved in subsequent decades, one of the standouts being the cheery "spice o' life" emblem, introduced in 1972. These days, Crock-Pots may be more popular than Corning Ware, but we'll always hold a special place in our hearts for our oven-worn standbys. —Todd Coleman

CASSEROLES



RIGHT: JAMES OSELAND

RECIPE

Chicken Divan

SERVES 6

Chicken divan (left) was once a specialty of a now defunct restaurant in New York City named Divan Parisien. In *Knife and Fork in New York* by Lawton Mackall (Doubleday & Company, 1949), it's described as a "runaway success dish year in, year out...sliced chicken breast on broccoli in a sherry-laced sauce of cheese and cream, browned and brought to table bubbling hot". This version is based on one in *Crazy for Casseroles* by James Villas (The Harvard Common Press, 2003).

- 2** large boneless skinless chicken breast halves (about 1 lb.)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- 3** tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1** large head broccoli (about 2 lbs.), stemmed and broken into 1"-2" florets
- 5** tbsp. butter
- 1/4** cup flour
- 1** cup chicken stock
- 1** cup milk
- 3** tbsp. sherry
- 1/8** tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2** cup finely grated parmigiano-reggiano
- 1** cup slivered almonds
- 1/2** cup heavy cream

1. Season chicken with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add chicken and cook, turning once, until golden brown and just cooked through, 13-15 minutes. Transfer chicken to a plate; let cool slightly. Cut chicken lengthwise on the bias into 1/4"-thick slices and set aside.

2. Meanwhile, put broccoli into a large pot, cover with salted water, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until barely tender, 2-3 minutes. Drain and set aside.

3. Preheat oven to 375°. Rub the inside of a 2-quart casserole dish with 1 tbsp. butter; set aside. Melt remaining butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add flour and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Gradually pour in stock and milk while whisking constantly. Cook until very thick, about 10 minutes. Add salt and pepper, sherry, nutmeg, and half the cheese; stir until cheese melts, about 1 minute. Remove cheese sauce from heat and let cool slightly.

4. Arrange broccoli in the prepared dish in a single layer; sprinkle with remaining cheese. Arrange chicken evenly over top; sprinkle with almonds. In a large bowl, beat the heavy cream to soft peaks; fold into sauce. Pour sauce over chicken. Bake, with a baking sheet underneath to catch any drips, until golden brown and bubbling, about 30 minutes.

CASSEROLES

of casseroles was thrift. Casseroles are as close as you can get to bottomless pots, meals that are easily stretched to feed extra mouths at church suppers or fund-raisers or when unexpected company shows up. When meat was rationed during the war, a housewife could expand her family's allotment of protein by adding beans, noodles, or rice, along with a liquid, to produce a hearty meal. She probably also figured out quickly that casseroles provided a great way to use leftovers, meat or otherwise. A famous post-Thanksgiving dish, known as, among other things, turkey-stuffing strata, combines leftover turkey and stuffing moistened with leftover gravy.

If casseroles saved money, they also saved time and effort. The mother who toiled all day on an assembly line or in an office could put everything into the pot and refrigerate it before she left for work in the morning. When she got home and the whole concoction had had a good day's rest, it went into the oven. And, since the cooking pot could be placed directly on the table, there was one piece fewer to wash when dinner was over.

How did such earnest, honest, utterly cozy family dishes become the stars of my dinner parties in the late 1950s? Well, after the war, the food sensibilities of average Americans were refined significantly. Perhaps that had to do with the fact that returning soldiers brought home a taste for then exotic fare like pizza, but more likely it was because America's interest in the world

outside its borders was growing—our insularity was dissolving. Strange as it seems today, casseroles had a romantic, earthy aura that evoked European meals. In his 1955 *Casserole Cookbook*, no less a gastronome than James Beard calls them "an ingenious European idea with a unique American twist", lauding the ability of French peasants to give "inexpensive odds and ends of food...an almost miraculous savor".

And remember that the men may have come back after the war, but not the household help, who had graduated to blue- and white-collar jobs. Middle-class women who through the early 20th century could count on at least one "girl" to help out at dinner parties were forced to do it all on their own. What could be more efficient and impressive than a casserole? Frugality was no longer a concern: some postwar books contain recipes featuring crabmeat, lobster, or steak. Given their capacity for surviving long delays, finished casseroles could remain in a warm oven while the host poured another round of daiquiris. They were considered respectable party fare well into the 1960s, when Julia Child's flutery voice first emanated from television sets, instructing us in how to master the art of French cooking.

WHAT HAPPENED? What changed all that? Blame the seductive powers of TV dinners and store-bought "dinner mixes",

like Hamburger Helper. Blame the fact that Americans traveling to Europe in ever greater numbers got to taste the real thing. Or blame the new abundance and variety of fresh produce and the growing sense that baked dishes were heavy and slow and square when we were starting to admire speed and lightness and lemongrass.

You can also blame the laziness that was replacing thrift in many American kitchens: so many casseroles had degenerated into slapped-together mixtures of bouillon cubes and frozen and canned foods—they became a symbol of convenience, not quality. Women who prided themselves on conquering Julia Child's notorious 13-page recipe for french bread might make tuna-noodle casserole for their families but wouldn't dream of serving it to guests on a Saturday night. That dish, and its sisters, came to be designated by the slightly condescending label "comfort food"—dishes that we confess, with a self-mocking smile, that we used to like back before we knew any better.

Maybe it's time to take another look. These days, we serve champagne instead of martinis, and the jug wine has given way to albariño. The Guatemalan dress is long gone, as are the cigarettes. And everyone is on a diet. But wouldn't it be lovely to go to a dinner party some wintry evening and watch your hostess carry in an earthenware pot of bubbling chicken divan with, of course, a green salad and a loaf of crusty bread? 

OUR FAVORITE CASSEROLE COOKBOOKS

BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS CASSEROLE COOK BOOK (Meredith Press, 1968). This book is chockablock with internationally inspired dishes, buffet and table layouts, and, interestingly, a guide to the use of chopsticks.

THE CASSEROLE COOKBOOK by Jim [sic] Beard (Maco Magazine Corporation, 1955). Beard's smart guide is a cut above for its herb and spice chart, advice on wine, tips for improvising, and witty captions.

THE CASSEROLE COOKBOOK by John and Marie Roberson (Prentice-Hall, 1952). This broad assortment of reci-

pes, each incorporated into a complete menu plan, is introduced with a brief history of casseroles dating—believe it or not—to ancient Egyptian times.

THE CASSEROLE COOKBOOK: 175 MAIN DISH AND DESSERT CASSEROLES (Culinary Arts Institute, 1956). The standout aspect of this book is its detailed introduction, which gives instructions for sauces and other cooked ingredients called for in the recipes.

CASSEROLE COOKERY: ONE-DISH MEALS FOR THE BUSY GOURMET by Marian and Nino Tracy (Viking Press, 1945). The chatty royals of the casserole kingdom ac-

knowledge their own laziness and offer 150 no-fuss recipes for like-minded home cooks.

COOKING WITH CASSEROLES: SUNSET-TESTED RECIPES by the Editors of Sunset Magazine (Lane Publishing Company, 1958). About one-quarter of the recipes are labeled "a quickie"—that is, dishes prepared and cooked in under an hour. There's a surprisingly large section on veggie versions and a recipe for something called "mystery casserole".

COOK IT IN A CASSEROLE by Florence Brobeck (M. Barrows and Company, 1943). Brobeck advises readers to adjust recipes according to "the state of the family ration book" in this World War II-era tome.

CRAZY FOR CASSEROLES by James Villas (The Harvard Common Press, 2003). Replete with tips collected under the rubric "Casserole Chat" and anecdotes about each dish, this book rescues many classic recipes from undeserved oblivion.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING'S CASSEROLE BOOK (Consolidated Book Publishers, 1958). Cute drawings illustrate 67 jam-packed pages, including a section on "bake-alongs" that can cook concurrently with casseroles.

HOW TO COOK IN CASSEROLE DISHES by Marion Harris Neil (David McKay, 1912). One of the first American casserole cookbooks, this volume represents the "B.C." (Before Campbell's) era and boasts an appetizing range of straightforward recipes. —Amy McDaniel



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A Tisket, A Tasket: Gift Baskets Go Gourmet

Holiday gift giving the *Saveur* way

For friends and family and even clients and employees, gourmet gift baskets are full of the right stuff this holiday season.

At Fancifull Gift Baskets, owner Terry August says gourmet food is the most sought after item because it has a more indulgent quality to it. "Most gift-givers want to surprise someone with products that are unusual...and delicious of

course," August says.

Customized gourmet gift baskets also allow the gift giver to show off their food savvy. "Sending a basket of Belgian dark chocolate or Spanish wine is a great way to share a new food find," August says.

One great food find is Dancing Deer's Holiday Chewy Cookie Sampler, which includes the award-winning Molasses Clove chewy cookie. The soft, crackled-

top cookies look like they just came out of the oven. Chris Gagnon, VP of business and product development, says Dancing Deer's cookies, cakes and brownies are comfort foods with a gourmet twist. Flavors like chocolate tangerine and Meyer lemon raspberry ricotta make these tasty treats extra special.

Gourmet gift baskets also make great holiday gifts because they usually consist of several pieces and can be shared. Christophe Van Riet, owner of Nirvana Chocolates, describes his company as a virtual Belgian chocolate boutique. Gift-givers can pick from 45 different varieties of chocolates, marzipan and *pate de fruits* (fruit jellies), making each gift unique. For corporate buyers logo-engraved ribbons, labels and sleeves can also be added to make gifts more personalized.

Van Riet says the most popular variety of gourmet chocolate right now is dark chocolate. The newly discovered antioxidant health benefits of dark chocolate, the access to high-quality cocoa and America's evolving taste has increased the popularity of the bittersweet varieties.

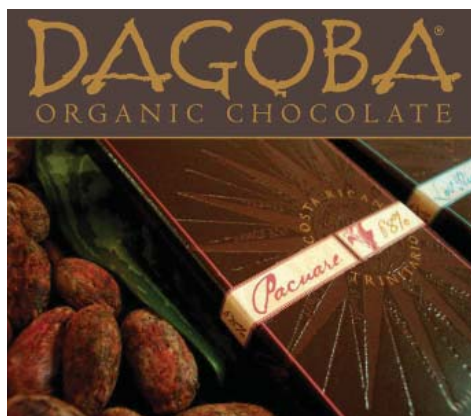
Single variety dark chocolate, with its rich flavor and aromatic notes is a great holiday gift.

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Another trend in gift baskets this year is exquisite packaging. A hand-painted tin, a Shaker-style box or bamboo-woven basket is very nice indeed, but Jinil Au Chocolat goes one step further and uses fine lead crystal for its holiday gift baskets. Mark Kaplan, Jinil Au Chocolat's president, says chocolate, fruit or candy usually doesn't last long, but a crystal vase or dish can be cherished for years. Jinil also offers a plethora of unique shaped chocolates to help create a lasting impression.

A basket of sweets is sure to bring cheer to anyone, but a gourmet gift basket with decadent home-style cookies or imported chocolates guarantees they will savor the season.

A variety of gourmet chocolate roses from Jinil Au Chocolat.



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IN THE SAVEUR KITCHEN

Techniques and Discoveries from Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman

Swiss Treats

CHRISTMAS to me means cookies, especially the Swiss cookies I learned to make when I worked as a cook at the Seehotel Meierhof just outside Zurich in the early 1970s. In Switzerland, the Christmas cookie season begins on December 6, the feast day of Saint Nicholas, when, according to tradition, someone dressed as Samichlaus—as Saint Nick is affectionately known in much of Switzerland—comes through the villages with a donkey in the evening, calling on every home and bearing gifts of freshly baked *Guetzli*, “goodies”, for the good children. He’s accompanied by two soot-smudged attendants, called *Schmutzli*, “dirty ones”, whose job it is to round up the bad boys and girls. Among the *Guetzli* the good kids get to enjoy are spicy, tender lebkuchen, or gingerbread cookies (see page 40 to read about pfeffernüsse, cousins of lebkuchen); rich and nutty basler leckerli; an anise-flavored cookie called anisbrötli; and my favorite goodie of them all, spitzbuebe, whose name means bad boys. Spitzbuebe consist of two



Spitzbuebe, Swiss raspberry preserve-filled sandwich cookies, right.

KITCHEN



Top, the jammy bottoms and sugary tops of spitzbuebe; above, Nick Malgieri runs a spatula under rolled-out dough to release it from the surface.

delicate, buttery cookies separated by a thin layer of raspberry preserves that have been reduced and thickened on the stovetop. The top cookie, sprinkled with a dusting of confectioners' sugar, has a hole resembling a doughnut's that reveals the luscious, mirrorlike layer of preserves within. I can't think of a sweet

that has a more Christmasy disposition. Whenever I make spitzbuebe for the holidays, I fondly remember congregating with some of my co-workers in the Seehotel Meierhof's pastry shop on the pastry chef's days off for secret *Guetzli* parties. Thank goodness the *Schmutzli* never found out. —Nick Malgieri

RECIPE

Spitzbuebe

(Swiss Raspberry Preserve-Filled Sandwich Cookies)

MAKES ABOUT 3 DOZEN

This recipe comes from master baker Nick Malgieri, a cookbook author and the director of the baking program at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City. You can make and chill the dough for these cookies up to two days in advance.

3/4 lb. butter (3 sticks), softened	3 1/2 cups flour
2 cups confectioners' sugar	1 cup seedless raspberry preserves
3 egg yolks	

1. Beat butter and 1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on low speed. Increase speed to medium; beat until light and fluffy. Add yolks one at a time, beating until smooth after each addition. Reduce speed to low and add flour 1/2 cup at a time, beating after each addition to combine. Scrape sides of bowl with a spatula; give the dough one last stir. Transfer dough onto a large sheet of plastic wrap and press it into a 9" x 11" rectangle. Cover with more plastic wrap, place on a large plate, and let chill for 1 hour.

2. Arrange racks in upper and lower thirds of oven; preheat to 325°. Divide chilled dough into 6 pieces. Rewrap 5 pieces individually in plastic wrap and chill. On a lightly floured surface, work the dough piece gently with a rolling pin to warm it slightly. Keeping surface and dough floured, roll dough into a 9" square. (If dough sticks, gently run a spatula underneath it, to release it.) Using a 3" round cookie cutter, cut out 9 circles of dough and transfer them to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet about 1" apart; reserve scraps. Repeat process with remaining chilled dough pieces. Combine leftover scraps into a ball. Reroll dough and continue cutting circles. Using a 1 1/4" round cookie cutter, cut a hole in the center of half of the circles—these are the tops. Bake all cookies in batches, rotating pans halfway through, until just pale golden, about 15 minutes. Let cookies cool completely.

3. Put preserves into a small pot and bring to a boil, stirring, over medium heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring, until thickened and reduced by about one-quarter, about 5 minutes. Transfer preserves to a bowl; let cool. Put remaining confectioners' sugar into a sieve; dust cookie tops. Turn whole cookies upside down—these are the bottoms; spoon about 1/2 tsp. of preserves onto each. Using a small spatula, spread preserves to within 1/8" of the edges. Cover each with a cookie top. Transfer remaining preserves into a plastic bag and snip the end. Using it like a piping bag, pipe a small amount of preserves into each hole. Serve cookies immediately or store between sheets of wax paper in an airtight container at room temperature.

A CONDIMENT CLARIFIED

Along with ketchup and mustard, worcestershire sauce is part of the old guard of bottled condiments that line American refrigerator shelves. We add it to marinades, gravy, barbecue sauces, even cocktails, and its savory, sweet, and earthy properties are known to make meat dishes—including the shepherd's pie on page 84—taste meatier. But what is worcestershire sauce, exactly? According to the wrapper of a Lea & Perrins bottle I recently examined, the ingredients include vinegar, molasses, chiles, tamarind (see page 58), and anchovies. Surprised by the last, I did a little research and discovered an



interesting, if debatable, backstory. In the 1830s, a retired British colonial governor named Lord Sandys returned to England from the Indian state of Bengal, carrying with him a recipe for a savory condiment consisting of anchovies fermented in brine. He asked a pair of chemists based in the town of Worcester, John Wheeley Lea and William Henry Perrins, to try to replicate the mixture on a larger scale; their experiments allegedly yielded unappealing results. But instead of tossing it out, Lea and Perrins bottled the brew and left it in a basement. On opening the bottles two years later and bravely venturing a taste, they discovered that the resulting fermentation had produced a pleasantly flavored sauce. A patent was summarily obtained, and the rest is tangy history. —Lily Binns

KITCHEN

Gratin Made Easy



FEW THINGS are more satisfying than a crusty gratin, straight out of the oven. Gratins are traditionally made with a number of vegetables, like the gratin de courge (squash gratin) in our Provence feature (see page 42). But the classic version in both France and the United States is the potato gratin, also known as gratin dauphinois or scalloped potatoes. Years ago, when I learned to make the dish, I took great pains to shingle layer upon layer of the sliced potatoes carefully into the baking dish before covering them with cream and cheese, repeatedly pressing down on the slices so that they'd remain submerged in the liquid while they baked. It was laborious and slow and, I later discovered, kind of a waste of time. No careful layering or oven-side tending is needed if

you add a simple preliminary step: combine all the ingredients except the cheese in a pot, cook until the mixture thickens (the potatoes cook partially, releasing some of their starch and absorbing some of the cream), transfer the whole mixture to a casserole, top it with cheese, and bake. You still get the same, beautiful result but minus the fuss. Still, some traditionalists

remain unconvinced. To them I offer a testimonial, e-mailed recently by my friend Charlotte Davis, a graphic artist in Boston. "The potato gratin was the star of the evening last night," she wrote after making it. "My husband, Tim, was appalled at the process and predicted failure or a nasty separation at the least. Hah! He ate his words." —*Todd Coleman*

METHOD

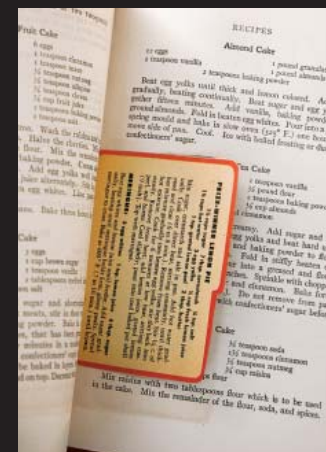
Potato Gratin

Preheat the oven to 400°. Rub the inside of an 8" x 8" baking dish with 1 tbsp. butter. Smash 2 cloves garlic with the side of a knife and sprinkle generously with salt. Chop and scrape the garlic into a mushy paste. Peel 6 large waxy potatoes (about 2½ pounds), such as red bliss, and thinly slice them with a knife or a mandoline. (They should be about 1/8" thick.) Combine garlic paste, potatoes, 2 cups half-and-half, and 4 tbsp. butter (cut into 1/2" pieces) in a pot; stir. Season with salt and a few turns of the pepper mill and taste the creamy liquid—it should be seasoned generously. Grate in a hint of nutmeg. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat while stirring the mixture with a wooden spoon. After 8–10 minutes the potatoes will be a little tender, and their starch will have thickened the liquid considerably. Transfer the mixture to the prepared dish; smooth the top as much as possible. Cover the gratin with 1 cup grated gruyère and bake until deeply golden brown, about 20–30 minutes. Let gratin cool and set a little before serving. Serves 6.

The potato gratin ready to cook on the stovetop, above left; above right, the crusty potato gratin.

LOST AND FOUND

When I buy a used cookbook, one of the first things I do when I get it home is rifle through it in search of any loose recipes that might be hiding inside, pressed between the pages like leaves from an autumn day long ago. Sometimes I find recipes handwritten on index cards; others are torn from the pages of newspapers or magazines. One recent excavation unearthed recipes for a prizewinning lemon pie, creole green beans, and baked alaska. Were they old family favorites? Or had



someone just slipped the recipes into the book with the notion that they might come in handy one day? I'll never know, but I'm grateful for the glimpse they offer into the life of the cook who once owned that book. —*T.C.*

KITCHEN

What a Ham!



Frank Ottomanelli, above left; center, cutting a fresh ham into two parts; right, a fresh shank-end ham (left) and a fresh butt-end ham.

IT'S USUALLY CURED, salty-sweet, and ready to eat, but what, exactly, makes a ham a ham? When such questions come up, I usually pay a visit to Frank Ottomanelli, my favorite butcher. Ottomanelli—along with his brothers, Jerry, Peter, and Joseph, and his son, Matthew—runs the O. Ottomanelli's & Sons butcher shop in New York's Greenwich Village (see page 99). (The O stands for Onofrio, Frank's father, who founded the business in 1935.)

To truly understand ham, said Ottomanelli when I stopped by the shop recently, you have to start at the beginning: the pig. Ham, he explained, comes from the hind leg of the animal, and a whole fresh ham—Ottomanelli pulled a sizable one out to show me—typically weighs between 14 and 20 pounds. “We don't leave the hoof on,” he assured me with a wink. A whole ham can be separated into two smaller parts—a good thing if you're serving fewer people and

don't want leftovers. The shank-end ham is cut from the lower leg and tends to have more skin, or “rind”; the plumper and meatier butt-end ham is cut from the upper portion. (Ottomanelli says “half” instead of “end,” in his butcher's speak.) Often the aitch bone, part of the pelvis, is still attached to the butt-end ham; Ottomanelli always asks his customers whether they'd like that removed, which makes slicing easier.

But, Ottomanelli told me, a ham is still called a ham even if it's not cured or smoked—many cooks enjoy roasting a fresh, uncured ham. Feeling pretty satisfied after my cheery exchange with Ottomanelli, I headed back to my kitchen with a fresh shank-end ham, which I intended to cure and bake myself (see recipe, right). —*Liz Pearson*

METHOD

Corned Ham

SERVES 8-10

This deliciously moist ham is cured in salt (a process known as corning). The recipe is an adaptation of one that appears in *Seasoned in the South* by Bill Smith (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2006). Insert a knife into either end of a rinsed and dried 8-10-lb. fresh shank-end ham (see left), next to the bone, making 3"-deep incisions in each end. Fill the incisions and rub the outside of the ham with about 1¼ cups kosher salt. Collect and reserve any salt that doesn't cling to the ham; store in a container in refrigerator. Place ham in a non-reactive pan and cover with plastic wrap, then aluminum foil; let chill. Turn ham every 1-2 days, rerubbing with remaining salt, for 7 days. (Pour off any juice that collects in the pan.) Wash the ham under cold running water; be sure to flush out the salted incisions. Transfer ham to a large, clean container and cover with cold water; let chill overnight. Drain. Preheat oven to 325°. Bake ham on a rack in a roasting pan, covered, for 1 hour. Uncover, increase oven temperature to 375°, and continue to bake, basting from time to time, until the meat pulls away from the bone, about 3 hours more. (Cover ham loosely with a piece of aluminum foil if skin is browning too fast.) Set ham aside to let rest a little, then carve and serve.



MAMA TRIED

As a native of Atlanta stranded in New York City, I miss Southern cooking almost more than anything else. Every year, I look forward to going home for my family's Christmas breakfast of fried pork cutlets and golden biscuits. For most of my life my mother made the biscuits—at least, she *tried* to make them. In most Southern families, biscuit making is a benchmark skill, passed down from generation to generation. My mother, however, plainly lacked the biscuit-making gene. Every Christmas morning, we silently ate the dry, hard pucks she pulled from the oven. They had an off taste—not metallic or bitter, just off. “We could sit there and pitch balls of your mama's raw dough back and forth, it was so dense,” my father recalls. It became the stuff of family legend, albeit behind our mother's back. We toyed with the idea of staging an intervention. But then who would make the biscuits? After



all, bad biscuits are better than no biscuits. My brother, Josh, taking matters into his own hands, arranged a biscuit-making lesson with my dad's mother, Agnes Merle McDaniel. An eager (and desperate) pupil, he absorbed all her principles, the most important of which is the use of a light touch. “Once you add the buttermilk, don't even stir the batter—just jiggle the bowl until a ball forms,” Grandma instructed. When she deemed him ready, my grandmother armed Josh with her perfectly seasoned cast-iron pan. My brother's newfound talent now fully apparent, we solemnly relieved our mother of her duties, and Josh has made the Christmas biscuits ever since. Sore at first, my mother was eventually glad that Josh had taken over. “Making biscuits, your hands just get all doughy and sticky, anyway,” she said. —*Amy McDaniel*

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THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered food products and kitchenware too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY LIZ PEARSON

Fare

At Cesare Casella's restaurant, Maremma (228 West Tenth Street, New York City; 212/645-0200; www.maremmanyc.com), bistecca alla fiorentina made with Black Angus beef is often on the menu. As a special treat every month or so, the restaurant serves the same dish made with beef from a Tuscan **Chianina** cow to customers who make a special reservation in advance. Call the restaurant directly for details. Kalustyan's (212/685-3451; www.kalustyans.com) sells the **mixed essence** (\$3.99 for a 4-ounce bottle) and **burnt sugar** syrup (\$4.99 for a 15-ounce bottle) you'll need to make Trinidad black cake. Penryn Orchard Specialties (916/769-5462; www.penrynorchardspecialties.com) sells Japanese massaged dried **persimmons** (\$28 per pound; ask for "hoshi-gaki").

List

For the items in our food gift list, contact Carr Valley Cheese (800/462-7258; www.carrvalleycheese.com) for the Carr Valley Prize Winners, Squirrel Brand Co. (214/585-0100; www.squirrelbrand.net) for the five-pepper meyer private reserve cashews, Lobel's of New York (877/783-4512; www.lobels.com) for the 36-ounce porterhouse steak, ImportFood.com (888/618-8424; www.importfood.com) for the fresh Thai produce kit, Zingerman's (888/636-8162; www.zingermans.com) for Special Wynad Pepper, Western Date Ranches (760/572-0088; www.medjooldates.com) for jumbo medjool dates, Lammes Candies (800/252-1885; www.lammes.com) for the peppermint kisses, and

Melissa's/World Variety Produce (800/588-0151; www.melissas.com) for the pomegranates.

Ingredient

Melissa's/World Variety Produce (800/588-0151; www.melissas.com) sells **jerusalem artichokes** (\$29.80 for a 5-pound box; ask for "sunflower chokes").

Cellar

For the Rioja **wines** in our tasting notes, contact the following: Fine Estates from Spain (781/461-5767) for Bodegas Muga Prado Enea Gran Reserva and Bodegas Muga Reserva, Vintage Wines Inc. (718/818-0808) for Bodegas Riojanas Monte Real Reserva and Bodegas Riojanas Viña Albina Reserva, Pasternak Wine Imports (800/946-3110) for CVNE Imperial Gran Reserva and CVNE Viña Real Crianza, Polaner Selections (914/244-0404) for López de Heredia Viña Bosconia Reserva and Marqués de Riscal Baron de Chirel Reserva, Eber Bros./NDC (914/937-5007) for Marqués de Murrieta Reserva, Shaw Ross (954/430-5020) for the Marqués de Riscal Reserva, and Michael Skurnik Wines (516/677-9300) for La Rioja Alta Gran Reserva and La Rioja Alta Viña Ardanza.

Classic

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to make the whole poached salmon with cold mayonnaise.

Tamarind

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Rum

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Australia

Visit your local farmers' market to buy the **crab apples** you'll need for making the crab apple jelly, or contact Melissa's/World Variety Produce (800/588-0151; www.melissas.com) to have some shipped to you (\$17.70 for each 3-pound box). Sur La Table (800/243-0852; www.surlatable.com) sells the 10-cup **pudding basin** (\$22.95 each) you'll need for making the Christmas pudding with custard sauce.

Kitchen

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Correction

In the List section of our October 2006 issue we misspelled the name of the chef at A Single Pebble in Burlington, Vermont. His name is Steve Bogart.

SAVEUR (ISSN 1075-7864) Issue: No. 98, December 2006. SAVEUR is published nine times per year (January/February, March, April, May, June/July, August/September, October, November, and December) by World Publications, LLC, 460 N. Orlando Ave., Suite 200, Winter Park, FL 32789. Copyright 2006, all rights reserved. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. Periodicals postage paid at Winter Park, Fla., and additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIPTIONS: U.S., \$29.95 for one year, \$49.95 for two years. Foreign surface mail to Canada: \$38.95 for one year; to other foreign destinations: \$47.95. For subscription information, please call 877/717-8925. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SAVEUR, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. For faster service, please enclose your current subscription label. EDITORIAL: Send correspondence to Editorial Department, SAVEUR, 304 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010; e-mail: saveur@worldpub.net. We welcome all editorial submissions but assume no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Retail sales discounts available; contact Circulation Department. The following are trademarks of SAVEUR and World Publications, and their use by others is strictly prohibited: IN THE SAVEUR KITCHEN, SAVEUR FARE, SAVEUR MOMENT.

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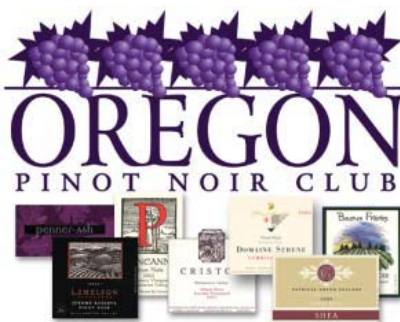
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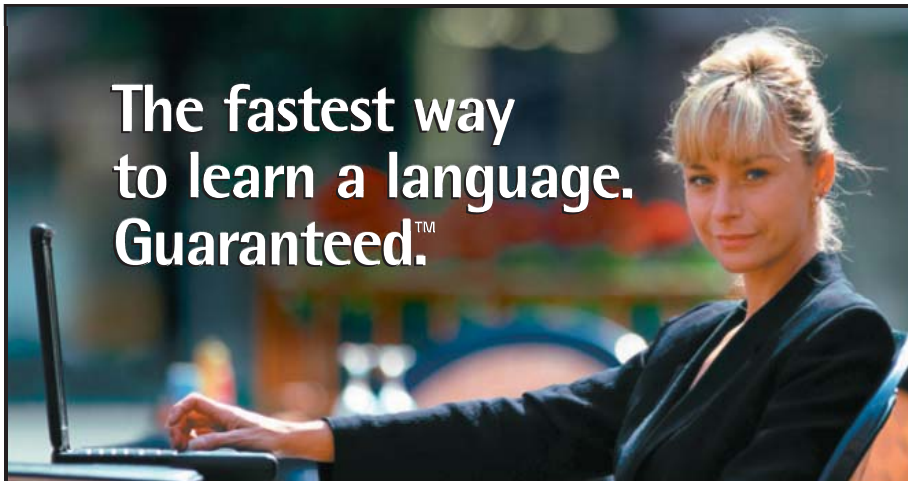
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M O M E N T



TIME 1:00 P.M., April 24, 2006

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No, it's not the smoking section. It's the premiere of Dinner in the Sky, a series of high-flying promotional events around Europe.

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